



# OCEANIC ART PROVENANCE & HISTORY



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# OCEANIC ART PROVENANCE & HISTORY

## Introduction

There is a reason why art has a provenance while virtually everything else does not. Great art captures something enduring and in turn becomes, in some sense, immortal. It lives beyond its owner and, as it passes through the generations, its provenance comes along for the ride with an ever-increasing influence, giving ownership its own tether to art's immortality.

The ownership of art is a curious thing. It is in some ways forever but in others always only partial. When I see a former piece of mine in a new collection or illustrated in some publication, I get a great sense of pride that the object was once mine. But then I think of all the previous living owners who see the same object and can legitimately claim that same pleasure—as if their former ownership never quite ended when the physical object changed hands. This is the beauty of provenance. It is that eternal connection between art and its former owners. I consider this relationship sacred.

On its surface, provenance is a rather dry thing, a chronological list of names most often encountered in auction catalogs. It amounts to the known itinerary of an object's resting places along its history of ownership. But by research, the names take life, and provenance can be an important dimension in appreciating the piece—as the art object physically connects us to its prior owners—their taste, sense of beauty, and even their physical touch from having handled and treasured the object.

Of course, the appreciation for Oceanic art can be a purely aesthetic experience. The formal qualities of color, composition, style, and surface patina combine to make something pleasurable to behold. With tribal art, there is the ethnographic understanding of an object's function and cultural significance which adds a beguiling element to the aesthetic experience. That the wood figure was, in many instances, an actual living, breathing ancestral spirit to its original owners adds an unmistakable aura of otherworldliness to the sculpture.

It's unfortunate that provenance is often the only part of an object's history that is known. Because this begins after its acquisition in a South Pacific village, provenance is often limited to private collectors, museums, gallerists, and auction houses. What provenance doesn't indicate is a piece's history within the culture that produced and used the object. That potentially heroic history stands mute within the sculpture. Rare indeed are those pieces whose life stories have been duly recorded in the field. So instead, we are left to focus our attention on the item's history of ownership, its provenance, only after its collection.

While the art object is a discreet entity, as owners we can affect its appreciation and renown. It is how we contribute, in a small way, to the significance of the art object. The maker is, of course, the artist and true genius, but we owners can and do add something by our own choices of display, of photography, by emphasizing certain aesthetic qualities, and by our research. There is a pleasure in uncovering or filling in the lost details of an object's provenance—by connecting that often-long tail of history that follows the object through time and place as its journey continues, inevitably, long past our own.

Michael Hamson

August 2021



## 1 Gogodala Comb

Balimo area, Middle Fly River District, Western Province,  
Papua New Guinea

Gogodala culture area

Collected by Frank Heald Sr. in 1923

Loaned to Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
1926–1960 (CMA inv. L759/15)

Bruce Frank Primitive Art, New York

Irene Beard Collection, London

Late 19th/early 20th century

11 ¼" (28.6 cm) in height



Of the two known combs from the Gogodala area this is the oldest and most visually striking. The bold colors and strong graphic quality of Gogodala art are on beautiful display with this example. The ears and nose are pierced, while the eyes are inlaid with pearly shell. There is a slight tilt to the head, a distended tongue, and the torso has broad shoulders and flexed arms. The Carnegie Museum accession number is written in white on the reverse.





## Gogodala Comb from the Frank L. Heald, Sr. Collection

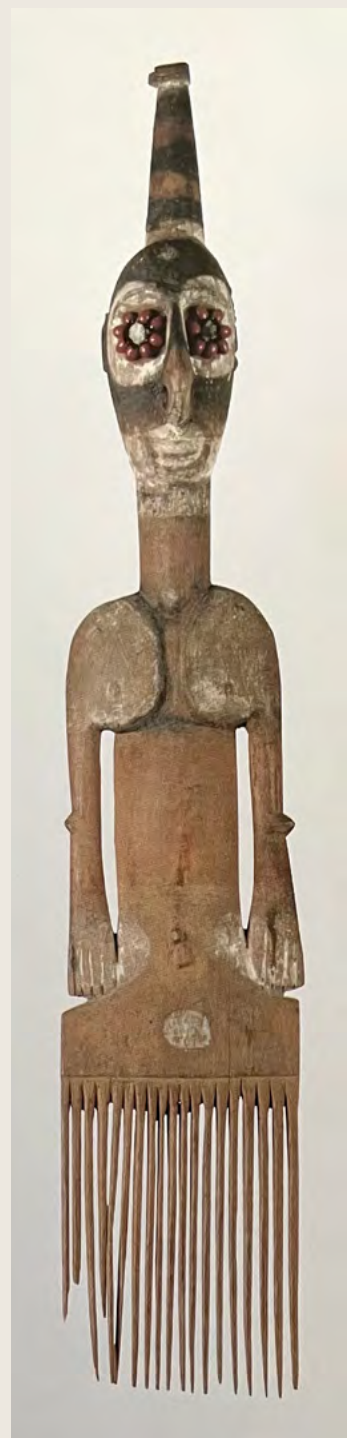
Robert L. Welsch

This carved comb from the Gogodala people of the Western Province of Papua, New Guinea was obtained by the American dredge operator Frank Heald, Sr. in 1923. We don't know precisely where Heald obtained it—possibly from working in the remote Middle Fly River District or perhaps he acquired it from someone who had bought it from its Gogodala owner during a government patrol in the area. The earliest patrols in the area began about 1910, sporadically returning to the area every year or so. While some Gogodala art objects resemble some of the art traditions of the Papuan Gulf, as I have noted elsewhere (Welsch 2005), it is an artistically distinct tradition in its color palette, in its materials, and in its presentation of the face and body.

The Gogodala people traditionally inhabited a large rainforest territory along the Aramia River in what is now the Western Province of Papua, New Guinea. The Aramia is a large western tributary of the Bamu River, flowing north and east of the Fly River estuary. Although most of the Gogodala traditionally lived along the Aramia, their hunting territories extended southward to the northern bank of the Fly River estuary, where they would have had occasional contact with the larger populations of Kiwai peoples. Their distinctive material culture is often richly painted in red, black, white, and yellow (here only red and black), which distinguishes their art from that of most of their neighbors along the Fly River and the Papuan Gulf. There is some reason to believe that yellow ochre was less common in the past than in recently made objects, and this comb would support that interpretation.

Decorated Gogodala art objects have been known to outsiders since the first decade of the twentieth century. But this art tradition is best known today because of the writings of Tony Crawford (1981), whose pioneering work starting in 1972 studied objects in collections around the globe and worked with local villagers to bring about a renewal of this distinctive art style. From the 1970s until the 2000s this renewed style flourished on the international art market and in the art shops of Port Moresby. The art had almost died out in the villages before Crawford visited the region and reinvigorated production of masks, carvings, and other objects for the international curio market.

The earliest pieces from the Gogodala were collected by patrol officers in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the United States, the earliest collection is in Chicago at The Field Museum. Curator A. B. Lewis purchased about two dozen Gogodala pieces at Daru in 1912 from Hugh Massey-Baker, who was then resident magistrate of the Western Division, the chief government officer in the division at the time (Welsch 1998:2:111–112). Several of these pieces are illustrated in Crawford's book, which inventories nearly every known pre–World War I piece from the Gogodala area. Crawford identified these Field Museum pieces as coming from W. N. Beaver (1920), but from Lewis's notes I



*Gogodala Comb, Acquired by Charles Melbourne Ward between 1930-1966, Inv. No. E 72959, Australian Museum, Sydney.*

believe they were actually collected by Massey-Baker. The point is that small collections started coming out of Gogodala around 1910, even though a few pieces may have left the region somewhat earlier. The several larger masks that Lewis acquired remain quite impressive for their time.

Figurative combs are rarely found in any of the early Gogodala collections. In many parts of Papua, New Guinea, combs of this sort were used as ornaments placed in the thick hair for ceremonial occasions—that Gogodala men typically shaved their heads or kept their hair fairly short probably accounts for the scarcity among them. In Crawford's (1981) inventory of early museum collections of Gogodala objects he includes no examples of combs. Yet there is a fine, large example in the Australian Museum donated in 1979 by Charles Melbourne Ward that was acquired before his death in 1966 (no. E 72959)—thus well before Crawford's cultural revival.

While rare within the Gogodala culture, carved wooden figurative combs are classic in a number of nearby areas—the Lower Fly River, Kiwai Islands and other parts of the Papuan Gulf. The Gogodala had occasional contact with Goaribari people on that island at the mouth of the Bamu River and with people on Urama Island further east into the Papuan Gulf. Frank Hurley's photographs from 1920–1923 show that while the Gogodala rarely wore hair ornaments, men from other tribes in their neighborhood at Goaribari and Urama typically wore all sorts of ornaments in their hair (Specht and Fields (1984:124–139).

The Gogodala may have encountered similar combs worn by men in one of these other tribes and were inspired to carve them for themselves. This was not a unique experience, because nearly all ethnic groups in Papua, New Guinea for centuries have borrowed ideas from neighboring tribes incorporating these motifs and styles into their art and material culture.

Frank L. Heald, Sr. (1875–1955) lived in Chester, West Virginia just west of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Heald was a professional dredge operator and oilwell driller who helped build the Panama Canal during the decade before he travelled to New Guinea. His profession took him all over the world, and, like other travelers, he brought interesting objects back to his home city. In 1926, he loaned his collection from New Guinea and some objects from Peru to the Carnegie Museum of Art where they were displayed as part of their ethnological collections (CMA inv. L759/15).

The Carnegie Museum has rather little material from Papua, New Guinea so it is likely that some of the items in this collection, including this piece, were exhibited in the 1920s. During World War II, many servicemen served in the Pacific, and served throughout Melanesia, at places like Guadalcanal. Exhibits of New Guinea and Melanesian material were of interest to their families back home and the Museum may have exhibited some of this collection during the Pacific War. But this material ceased being of great interest after VJ day, and around 1960 the Museum returned the collection to the Heald family.

Not only was this piece in much better condition than the several small pieces Lewis collected in 1912, but its quality as an art object is much better than Lewis's smaller objects from Gogodala.

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*Frank L. Heald Sr. (the tall man with pipe) with family in Panama, circa 1912–1914*





## 2 Admiralty Island Ladle

Admiralty Islands, Manus Province, Papua  
New Guinea

Collected by Martin Voigt (1878–1952),  
Postmaster to German New Guinea  
between 1902 and 1906

Christie's New York, 20 November 1997, lot  
152

David Rosenthal, San Francisco

Cathryn Cootner Collection, Sonoma, CA  
19th century

10" (25.3 cm) in height

Elaborately decorated ladles were used in feasts and were often presented as gifts to whom the food was served. This example has a superb female figure with squared-off shoulders, large hands at the waist, and a clearly defined sex. The face is downward-looking with a restrained expression and the classic distended earlobes. The patina is ancient, dark brown, and glossy with age.







# Martin Voigt: Imperial Postal Agent, Photographer, and Collector of Ethnographica in German New Guinea from 1902 to 1906

By Dieter Klein

Martin Voigt (1878–1952) decided at the age of 24 to accept the well-paid position of chief postmaster for the colony of Deutsch-Neuguinea. Before that, he had completed his compulsory service in the army.

At the beginning of August 1902, he set out from Berlin on the long journey to the South Seas, and, after seven weeks at sea, reached the colony's main town, Herbertshöhe (today: Kokopo), on September 20. Here resided the Imperial Governor, Dr. Albert Hahl, and here all the authorities were concentrated. These were housed in the stately governorate building.

Voigt's handwritten notes on the photo show how the building was used. The individual rooms contained the governor's office, the office of the district bailiff, the clerk of the court, the secretary of the governorate, a library, and the post office. The latter can be recognized by the post office sign and the mailbox in front of the building. Incidentally, because of the vast amount of paper produced in this building by the German bureaucracy, the locals in Tok Pisin called it "House Paper."

After taking over the official duties from his predecessor, Voigt began his work as a postal agent. At first, he managed his work all by himself. But it soon became apparent that he was overburdened whenever a mail steamer appeared in Herbertshöhe. During these times he had to handle the incoming and outgoing mail and was crushed by the mass of material to be processed. To remedy this situation, he recruited additional employees. They were two Melanesians who became the first native postal subordinates in the German South Seas.

Through these two assistants, Voigt now had direct contact with the native population. Apparently, he succeeded in understanding and also recognizing Melanesian mentality and ways of thinking. This will certainly have helped him later in the acquisition of ethnographica.



Fig. 2: Governorate building in Herbertshöhe



Fig. 1: Martin Voigt as a soldier in dress uniform

No sooner did the postmaster have two assistants than he was assigned a new job. Herbertshöhe and the surrounding plantations were to receive a telephone network. Voigt was now not only head of the post office but was also promoted to telegraph assistant. The construction of the telephone line proved to be difficult, especially in the impenetrable jungle.

Looking at the photo, one can very well imagine the hardships of line construction in such a terrain. In addition to the extremely dense forest, the heat, cloudbursts, storms, and earthquakes caused considerable difficulties—not to mention the plague

of insects. Moreover, in this situation Voigt was completely dependent on his Melanesian workers, with whom he obviously got along well. For his part, there were never any complaints or criticisms; on the contrary, he always reported approvingly about his “natives.”

On days off, the Europeans liked to get together for social gatherings on the various plantations. Or they went on excursions together in the surrounding area. Hospitality was very important among the colonists in German New Guinea.

The Germans liked to hike to the top of the 600-meter-high Mount Varzin (now: Vunakokor) in the hinterland of Herbertshöhe to enjoy the beautiful view and the fresh air. Martin Voigt stands leaning, sucking on a pipe. His friend Sigwanz rests with a wine bottle in his hand and has placed three more bottles in front of him. Melanesian police soldiers accompany and protect the officials.

Voigt's service activities allowed him to get to know highly diverse landscapes and ethnic groups. In the course of his service, his interest in various ethnological phenomena grew, as his photos prove. Gradually, he had also built up a collection of ethnographica. This was common, even fashionable, in the colony. Almost all Europeans collected artifacts and utensils of the locals. The artifacts were not only attractive, decorative pieces for their own home or effective souvenirs, but they could also be sold as well, to collectors or museums in Europe.



*Fig. 3: Voigt (with pith helmet) in the jungle, building telephone lines*

It is obvious that Voigt was offered many collector's items by planters, officials, and missionaries. These people were in a certain dependence on him because he could serve them in postal matters quite preferentially—or not.

One must also consider that the postmaster was in charge of all the postal agencies in the colony. Besides the main agency in Herbertshöhe, there were the postal agencies in Matupi, and, in the distant Kaiser Wilhelmsland, Berlinhafen (now Aitape), Stephansort (now Bom), and Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen (now Madang). This entailed Voigt making regular trips to various regions to conduct inspections of the four field agencies. In addition, three new postal agencies were established by him during his tenure, namely Finschhafen, Kāwieng (now Kavieng), and Simpsonhafen (now Rabaul).

Martin Voigt used the inspection trips to the widely scattered and highly diverse areas each time to acquire new ethnographic objects for his private collection. In addition, these trips offered him many opportunities to take photographs.





Fig. 4: Neu Mecklenburg (now New Ireland) North. A picture of His Majesty Kaiser Wilhelm II in the jungle with a native missionary teacher. Photographer Heinrich Fellmann, 1905

At the end of January 1904, he traveled to Kāwieng—a government station in the north of the island of Neu Mecklenburg (now New Ireland). Not only did he have to travel on the sea voyage with a severe bout of malaria, but he also wanted to take this opportunity to visit the new postal agency, as his help was apparently needed in setting it up. Voigt reports from this trip that he had also undertaken numerous tours in Neu Mecklenburg with Governor Hahl and had discovered many new things.

Now this region is known to be one of the most productive South Sea regions, producing amazing cult and art objects: The *malangan*, *uli* figures, and *tatuana* masks, for example, are the most famous art products of this island. Voigt's collection also contained some malangans, which he had obviously acquired locally. So he knew very well how to combine the pleasant with the useful during his business trip. He also kept photos of New Mecklenburg.

A native teacher of the Methodist mission (left) proudly presents a framed picture of His Majesty Kaiser Wilhelm II

at his house. It is an art print of the kind that was very common at the time. However, the permanent humidity has affected the image so much that the base has taken on very wavy forms. Nevertheless, the emperor's numerous medals are still clearly visible. After all, it is striking how the monarch himself reached the remote, primeval forests of a South Sea island.

The next major journey took Voigt to the main island of New Guinea, the German part of which was called Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Here, he first undertook the revision of the Stephansort postal agencies.

The Stephansort postal agency was located in the nearby mission house of the Protestant Rhenish Mission in Bogadjim, directly on the shore of Astrolabe Bay. It consisted of a single room. The official business was conducted by missionary Wilhelm Diehl, who sits immediately above the post house sign. Incidentally, the missionary was also an avid collector of ethnographica. One can well imagine that he wanted to please his postal boss and left him the occasional pieces. In any case, Voigt's collection includes several pieces from Astrolabe Bay, such as a typical shield from the Karkar Island and numerous spears.

Voigt then traveled on to Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula. (By the way, the German name of the place has been kept until today.) Here a new postal agency was to be established, which was also to be run by a local missionary. Martin Voigt helped with the introduction to the official business, since the man of God was still completely inexperienced in these matters.

Again, Voigt took the opportunity to look around the area to acquire a large collection of ethnographica.

In addition, he traded many birds of paradise. They were not available at Herbertshöhe in New Britain but only in mainland New Guinea. He needed the magnificent feathers for his female relatives in Germany, because such feathers were the big fashion in women's fashion, especially on hats, and accordingly in demand.

Back in Herbertshöhe, he wrote to his mother about this trip: “[...] Just now [I] gave three packages to Otto’s [note: i.e., his brother’s] address to the post office, contain a lot of garbage, but will bring you joy. [...] Made rich booty in New Guinea. It was a splendid trip [...]” As an explanation, “garbage” is Voigt’s disrespectful term for ethnographica, which truly does not correspond to today’s conception of “political correctness.” However, this could well be meant ironically, or did he simply want to appear detached to his mother? “Rich pickings” refers to the birds of paradise and the numerous artifacts he acquired. For example, his collection includes two great bowls from the Tami Islands and a conch shell from the Triton snail.

Martin Voigt also owned many artifacts from the Admiralty Islands. Unfortunately, there are no clues in his estate as to how he came by them. But as mentioned before: he had an excellent network with planters, officials, and missionaries in the colony. It is also quite possible that among his workers were people from the Admiralty Islands who helped him obtain a piece or two.

In the middle of 1905, however, Martin Voigt’s decided not to prolong his service with the governorate and to leave New Guinea for good. He felt that he could no longer cope with the demands of the service. The service had overtaxed him. The tropical climate contributed to this decision as it took its toll on him with recurring attacks of malaria. He was often so weakened by the malaria that he was unable to carry out his official duties for weeks at a time. He will also have realized that malaria could eventually cost him his life. He was confronted daily with this cause of death in Herbertshöhe. Several acquaintances and friends had died from this treacherous disease.

Voigt was once again lying ill when his successor (Joseph Mainka) finally arrived on April 16, 1906. He found Voigt “lying on a recliner in the post office room quite frail and miserable.” The induction into the postal business and the telephone business therefore dragged on for a full two months. It was not until the beginning of June that the sick man was able to board the ship for his journey home. He arrived in Germany in mid-July. However, he continued to suffer from the consequences of malaria for years so that he had to go to the spa again and again.

He took his extensive photographic and ethnological collection home with him, where he carefully guarded it until his death. Thus, a rich treasure has been preserved for posterity.

*Fig. 5: Bogadjim mission house. Missionary and postal agent Wilhelm Diehl sitting above the post house sign*



*Fig.6: Martin Voigt in Finschhafen*







### 3 Maori Feather Box, *Papahou*

North Island, New Zealand

Morris Pinto Collection

Sotheby's London, 9 May 1977, lot 32

Dates to the 1840s–1860s

14 ½" (36.9 cm) in height

The two types of Maori feather boxes are *wakahuia* and *papahou*. The *wakahuia* are the classic, oval shape with all over carved design and often figures jutting out from each end. The much rarer and often earlier feather boxes are the narrow rectangular *papahou*. The present example, while missing its lid, is superbly carved in relief with deep void spaces that highlight the opposing raised portions. The figures have paua shell eyes, and there is a warm smoothness to the surface from generations of use.







## Morris J. Pinto (1925–2009)

By Paul Lewis

Morris Pinto was a man with a profound sense of curiosity and a desire to discover and learn as much as he could about whatever interested him. He did not grow up with parents who collected, but as a young man he found himself drawn to art and discovered that certain sculptures and paintings could produce an instinctual and emotional reaction.

His path as a collector began with paintings; his first acquisition of note was a 1934 Mondrian composition, bought in 1965 from Ernst Beyeler, the great Swiss gallerist. Soon after this, Morris met Daniel Cordier, the art dealer and hero of the French Resistance, who introduced him to the painter and sculptor Jean Dubuffet. Morris's attention also began to turn at this time towards African sculpture, with which he felt the same profound emotional and intellectual resonance he experienced when confronted by the work of Dubuffet. The combination of African sculpture and Dubuffet paintings was at the heart of Morris's collecting, as illustrated in a September 1967 article in *Connaissance des Arts* entitled "Une nouvelle façon de vivre avec l'art"—a new way of living with art.

Morris's admiration for Dubuffet was shared by Charles Ratton, who, with Dubuffet and André Breton, was a founder of the *Compagnie de l'art brut*. The encounter with Ratton proved a crucial one for Morris, and for several years they would talk daily. Through Ratton, unquestionably the doyen of African art dealers, Morris acquired many exquisite sculptures that illustrate the pinnacle of what William Rubin described as "the Guillaume-Ratton taste." In his pursuit of the best, Morris also bought from other dealers and from fellow collectors.

From the late Jean Roudillon, he acquired seven sculptures from the collection of the painter and poet René Mendès-France, including a sublime Luba bow stand by the artist known as the Warua Master. Morris's innate curiosity and the thrill of discovery led him to explore other African art traditions, such as that of the Mumuye, which were first revealed to Europeans in the late 1960s and early 1970s; for a time, he owned the great Mumuye statue that is now in the Fondation Beyeler.

Although perhaps best known for having owned many masterpieces of African art, Morris's discerning eye was also drawn to Oceanic art. He owned the superb Solomon Islands shield recently sold in the auction of Michel Périnet's collection, and he had a predilection for Maori art. Morris appreciated both the innate spiritual power of a great Maori object such as the *koropata*, or feeding funnel, once in his collection and now at LACMA, as well as the affinity between its elaborate surface carving and the intricate, interlocking forms of works from Dubuffet's "*l'hourloupe*" cycle.

Morris was by nature expansive in his approach to collecting, particularly after he moved in the mid-1960s to a magnificent apartment overlooking the Seine on the quai d'Orsay, where he had the space to collect on a grand scale. However, he was not driven by mere acquisitiveness—although, like many collectors, he thrilled at the chase—but rather by a deep and passionate desire to experience afresh the emotional response unlocked in an encounter with a great work of art. He was quick and decisive in his initial judgment of objects, but they were to be studied intently once in the collection. Morris's daughter Jennifer recalls that he would often rearrange the collection; by looking at objects in different places and in relation to other works, he might perceive new resonances or some hitherto-undiscovered quality that could provoke discussion or contemplation. The painter Francis Bacon said that in his painting he sought to unlock sensation. In collecting great works of art, Morris Pinto achieved the same aim.







## 4 Buka Paddle

Buka or Bougainville Island, North Solomon Islands,  
Papua New Guinea

Acquired by Lieutenant General Augustus Lane Fox  
Pitt Rivers on June 10th, 1887, from Fenton & Sons,  
London

Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England

Illustrated in the *Pitt Rivers Museum Acquisition Journal*  
Vol. 3. p. 323

Abraham Rosman and Paula Rubel, New York  
Sotheby's New York, 8 April 2021, lot 45

Mid-19th century

64 ½" (163.8 cm) in length

Acquired in 1887 in London, this has to be one of the earliest securely documented Buka paddles in private hands. The classic *kokorra* spirit face is elegantly and precisely composed in low relief and painted with red, black, and white pigments. Below the face, written in pencil, is "P 323," indicating the page in the Pitt Rivers acquisition journal. The original Fenton & Sons label is still intact.





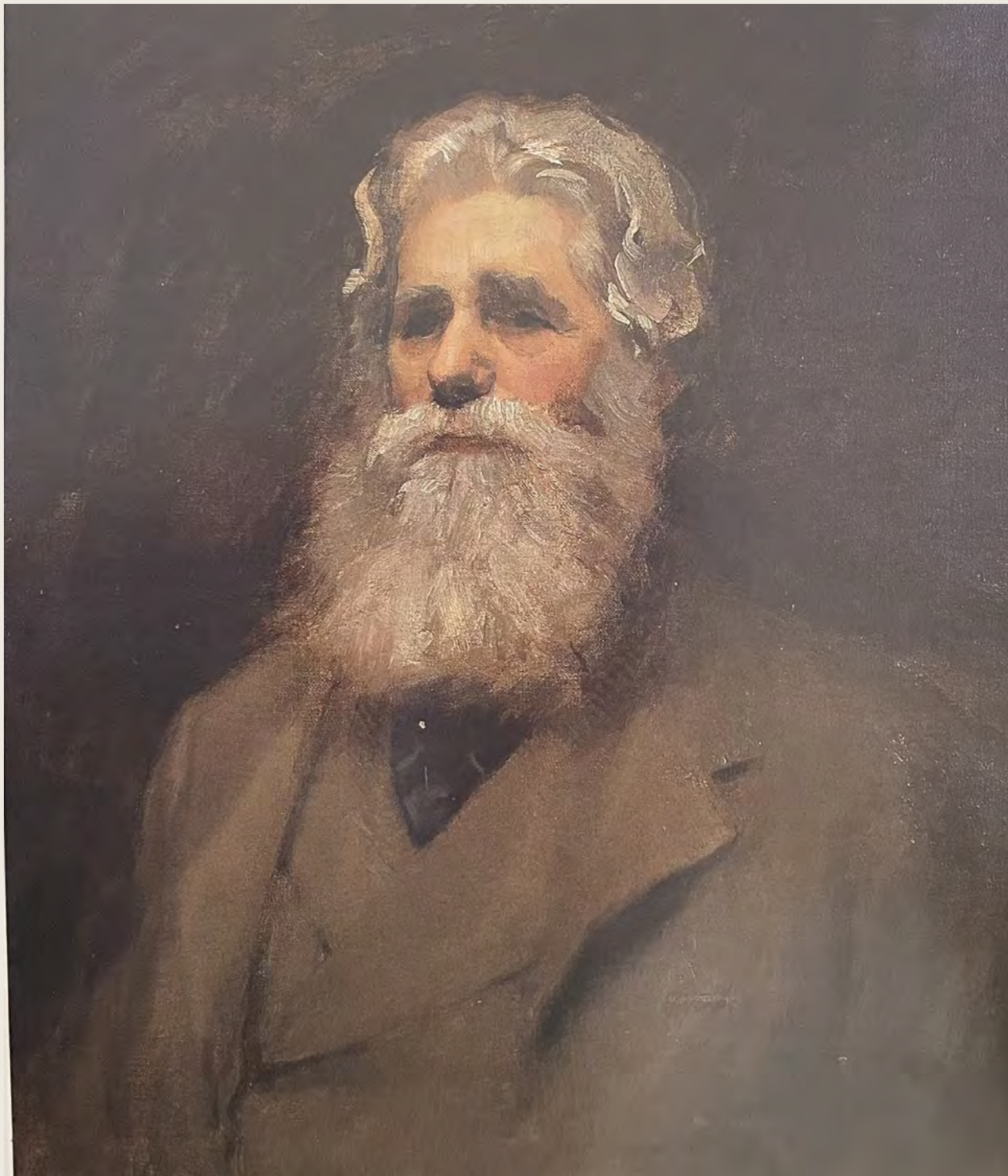




# Lieutenant General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers

14 April 1827–4 May 1900

By Hermione Waterfield



*Portrait of Lt. General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers painted by Fred Beaumont, 1897. Courtesy of Anthony L. F. Pitt-Rivers.*





*A view of the billiard room at Rushmore House, Dorset, with a figure, perhaps the Salisbury artist Waldo Johnson, circa 1890. Courtesy Anthony L. F. Pitt-Rivers.*

This is a brief history of an important collection formed by a remarkable man. It was dispersed in two parts: the first part in his lifetime by himself, the second by his grandson and his common-law wife.

Augustus Henry Lane Fox was born in 1827. As the second son of a country gentleman who enjoyed racing and hunting, and who was himself a second son, he was not rich, and his prospects were not promising. His father died when Augustus (or Fox as he was generally called) was only five, leaving the estate to his elder brother. His mother later moved to London, taking the thirteen-year-old Fox with her. In 1841 he entered the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and in 1845 he was commissioned a Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards.

In 1854 Fox was sent with the third battalion of the Grenadier Guards to supervise their rifle training in Malta, thence to Istanbul, Bulgaria, and finally Crimea, where he took part in the battle of Alma. It was his only experience of combat, of which he was immensely proud, for in October of that year he was declared unfit for service and sent back to England. Indeed, Fox always suffered from diabetes and a bronchial condition—in later life his doctor advised him to grow a beard to protect his throat. The ill-health that was to hound him all his life must have been frustrating for a man whom the army noted was zealous and hardworking, and no doubt contributed to his reputation for a bad temper.

It was probably the *Great Exhibition of the Works of Art of All Nations* in Hyde Park in 1851 that stimulated the inquisitive mind of young Fox. In a publication on locks and keys (1883), he admitted to collecting such items as early as 1850. In a book review, his great-grandson Michael wrote: "Pitt Rivers started collecting common types of objects from the primitive and the prehistoric past in 1852," and "He was a man with a mission in life: to unveil the laws of cultural evolution. He saw the facts of human remains as a continuous process of growth and decay, and just as Darwin applied these two component elements to his theory of continuity in nature, Pitt Rivers applied them to the material arts." Addressing members of the Anthropological Institute in Bethnal Green at the opening of his exhibitions there in 1874, Fox said: "[it] has been collected during upwards of twenty years ... solely





*A view of the Pacific Room, Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset. Courtesy of Anthony L. F. Pitt-Rivers.*

with a view to instruction. For this purpose, ordinary and typical specimens, rather than rare objects, have been selected and arranged in sequence, so as to trace, as far as practicable, the succession of ideas by which the minds of men in a primitive condition of culture have progressed from the simple to the complex."

The collection was kept in his London houses until he was posted to Guildford in 1873, when he arranged to loan most of it to the Bethnal Green extension of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert). Fox organized the layout for his first exhibitions there and wrote the catalogue which was to be published in four parts. The first part was on skulls, the second on weapons, the third on navigation and "the arts of savage and early races," and the fourth on prehistory, but only the first two parts were printed.

By 18 October 1878, the collection was transferred to South Kensington, and Richard Thompson was appointed Assistant Director. The displays included prehistoric material from all over Europe, and the General (as he had by now become, although still Lane Fox) had strong ideas about how it should be shown. The ledgers reflect the growing amount of material consigned to the museum, which must have increasingly exasperated the staff who handled it.

The following year was an important one for the General. He unexpectedly inherited the estates of his cousin, Horace, 6<sup>th</sup> Lord Rivers, son of his great-uncle the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron, whose older brother and five nephews had all died within a couple of decades of each other. A Royal License was issued on 4 June 1880 so that he—and, subsequently, his eldest son—might add Pitt Rivers to his existing surname

of Lane Fox, as stipulated in the will. With the name came the revenue from 27,000 acres of land in Dorset, Wiltshire, and Hampshire. In May 1881 he moved to palatial premises at 4 Grosvenor Gardens, near Victoria Station. The General was now rich and could afford to retire from the army completely—this he did in 1882 with the honorary rank of Lieutenant General.

In his new state of affluence, the General wrote to Thompson of his intention to extend his ethnographical collections, which would now require more space. He offered to pay the costs of a curator if the Council on Education acceded to his demands.

In 1881, the General installed himself at Rushmore, a large Victorian house near Tollard Royal, Dorset, amid a vast estate that split over into Hampshire and Wiltshire. A former Rivers with educational intentions had converted a farmhouse into a school for gypsy children. The General now rebuilt it to use as his museum, first called the Gypsy Museum, often referred to as the Peasant Museum, but finally just as The Museum, Farnham. It would appear to be the General who entered the first pages of the nine existing ledgers of his acquisitions.

The first entries are inconsistent, with measurements or other information often omitted. The first sketch is of the foot of a Roman casket in the form of a winged figure and is the only piece to be depicted on the third page. A knife is drawn on the following page, but there are four undecorated pages before a flint from the collection of Mr. Henriques is found on page 8. The rather-tentative ink drawings embellished with coloured washes appear to indicate the General at work, but later there appear to be several hands, and soon the competence and number of illustrations points to several assistants.

In Volume 3 (1891–1896), the illustrations become more elaborate and greater space is given to each entry. The writing is more consistent, probably that of his secretary, Harold St. George Gray, who had enrolled as boy clerk in 1888. Mr. E.B. Savage's collection of New Guinea artefacts, acquired on 20 October 1894, was meticulously recorded and beautifully drawn. W.D. Webster appeared in August 1895, at Oxford House, Bicester, from whom the General acquired a large Papuan Gulf mask, a shield, two skulls, a Solomon Islands parrying shield, a Yoruba bowl, and a Siamese musical instrument. Sir Arthur Gordon made further presentations (the first being in 1882) of Fijian artefacts in Volume 4 (1896–1897).

The General died after years of ill health on 4 May 1900. His eldest son, Alexander Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, inherited the estates on his father's death in 1900. No member of his family shared the General's interests in his museum or excavations.

At Alexander's death in 1927, the estates passed to his only son, George Henry. George had joined the army in 1910 and was wounded in 1914, after which he left with his wife, the actress Rachael Foster, and their two sons, Michael and Julian, for Australia to be *aide de camp* to his father-in-law, the Governor-General, Lord Foster. Being a forthright and outspoken character, he was not a success as a diplomat, so the posting was terminated, but not before George had developed an interest in the impact of civilization on primitive peoples. He was a member of the Polynesian Society to whose Journal he contributed "A Visit to a Maori Village, Being some Observations of the Passing of the Maori Race and Decay of Maori Culture" (1924, Vol. 33:48–65). In the article he described how he was saddened by the way in which the Maoris were taught English history rather than their own.

Whilst in the southern hemisphere he worked for a year on Aua Island, north of New Guinea, before returning to England. He was admitted to Worcester College, Oxford, where he gained a bachelor of science degree on the grounds of his work: *The Clash of Culture and the Contact of Races: an Anthropological and Psychological Study of the Laws of Racial Adaptability, with Specific Reference to the Depopulation of the Pacific and the Government of Subject Races* (1927). He was offered the



position of Assistant Professor at the University of California at Berkeley but was unable to take up the appointment because he was expected to manage the considerable estates he had inherited on his father's death.

George—or the Captain as he was normally referred to—formed the Wessex Agricultural Defense Association in Dorset and stood as a member of Parliament. An outspoken fascist, he sympathized with Hitler, whose ideas based on eugenics were the aspect of anthropology that interested the Captain (rather than the material culture so dear to his grandfather). He was imprisoned as a suspected enemy sympathizer when war was declared, but later released as a harmless eccentric on condition he did not go within ten miles of the Dorset coast. The Captain was notoriously bad-tempered and the staff at Sotheby's fled at his appearance in the salerooms. Others, like Michael Thompson, remember him as a genial and generous host.

The Captain, who admired his grandfather but not his father, was interested in the museum, which he reorganized with the help of L.H. Dudley Buxton and renovated at considerable expense. The amount of the repairs was enormous, so in 1932 Captain Pitt-Rivers began to seek means of recouping his losses. By April 1933, it was reported that Captain Pitt-Rivers was prepared to sell the entire collection to Bournemouth Corporation. He was dissuaded from this course of action, and he announced his intention to sell off some items in order to maintain the rest of the collection at Farnham.

The museum was still open after the Second World War, with Major Joyce as the curator. The Captain again tried to interest the government in taking it over for the nation but found the conditions of an endowment of £600,000 with no participation in the organization unacceptable. He sold an important bronze head and a rare ivory mask, both from Benin, to raise funds—having casts made to replace them on display. Other Benin items found their way into collections abroad through the dealers John Hewett and Kenelm Digby-Jones.

The museum was virtually closed in 1962 as George became increasingly ill and disillusioned with this section of his inheritance, which by now he regarded as an unwelcome encumbrance. It was not finally closed until his death in 1966 (on the death of Major Joyce, visits were arranged through his redoubtable wife).

The Captain had divorced Rachel and married again to have a third son, Anthony, in 1932. This marriage also failed and there was a further separation, but no divorce. He was disenchanted with his two older sons (Anthony was still a boy), but relied on Stella Howson-Clive, who came to live with him until his death (she changed her name to Pitt-Rivers by deed poll). Before he died the Captain set up a secret trust for the contents of the museum of which Stella was apparently the sole beneficiary. Putzel Hunt, John Hewett, Peter Wilson, and Kenelm Digby-Jones had helped him sell various items, either privately or through Sotheby's in 1965 and 1966, and continued to assist Stella in a similar manner. On the Captain's death his son Michael had offered to buy the contents of the museum from Stella—which included much else besides the ethnographical and archaeological items—when she was prepared to part with them. He was understandably furious when he discovered, in 1972, that sales had taken place and others were planned. He thought of suing Stella, but Lord Goodman advised him against such action. Kenelm Digby-Jones and Professor Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn helped to place the finds of the General's excavations in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, but the remainder was sold mostly at auction at Sotheby's between 1970 and 1977, and after Stella's death, at Christie's in 1990 and 1991. The nine accession ledgers that were kept by the General from 1881 until his death in 1900 are now in the University Library in Cambridge.

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Portrait of Captain George Pitt-Rivers aged about forty-five.  
Courtesy of Anthony L. F. Pitt-Rivers

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Peter Saunders, Andrew Deathe, and Martin Wright of the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum; Anthony Pitt-Rivers, Michael Thompson.

## 5 New Ireland Hornbill Mouth Ornament

Northern New Ireland, New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea  
American Museum of Natural History. Purchased by them in 1891  
from Appleton Sturgis, "but had been on deposit in the museum  
since approximately 1880" (S-2245).

Bernard Brown, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1965

Irene Beard Collection, London

Published in *Michael Hamson Oceanic Art Paris 2014*, no. 24,  
pages 52/3

Pre-1880

16 ¼" (41.2 cm) in length

What I find noteworthy about this hornbill mouth ornament, besides its incredibly early and fine provenance, is the delicacy of the beak that is hard to appreciate in these images. The underside is hollowed out, and each edge of the beak is extraordinarily thin. New Ireland carvers were some of the very best in Oceania, and this sure-handed competence is clearly evident in the easy precision of the design and execution.







# A Pre-1880 New Ireland Hornbill *Vatlam*, Dance Implement

By Jean-Philippe Beaulieu

This Hornbill dance implement, called a *Vatlam*, was featured in Malagan rituals in New Ireland. This is the *Vatlam* with the earliest known date of collection. It is pre-1880, the date when it was deposited in the American Museum of Natural History by Appleton Sturgis. It was subsequently officially purchased by the museum in 1891. It had been collected in New Ireland at the time of the very first contacts, exchanges, and trades. In those days, most activity was along the northeast coast or the central part of the west coast. Unlike the more common *Vatlam*, it has a peg at the bottom on the neck and not on the occiput. It was probably held in the hand rather than in the mouth but performed the same function as the other *Vatlam* in Malagan rituals. We have identified several examples in museum collections and found field information from Tabar Island about such artefacts. We note that the geometric design has striking similarities with a *Vatlam* made in Hamba village and collected in Lambusso by Augustin Krämer in 1909, at least 30 years later.

## BACKGROUND:

In Northern New Ireland, the ritual life and social organization of the clans were orchestrated by long and complex funeral ceremonies called 'Malagan.' Within the framework of the Malagan institution and New Ireland ritual life, an extraordinary diversity of statues, masks, and objects with very specific functions were created, sometimes for a single use lasting only a few minutes. As part of this rich corpus of work, small carved and painted wooden objects, called *Vatlam*, usually being held in the teeth of dancers and a few held in the hand. The dancers spiral with their arms wide open, swooping in rhythm



with drumming on bamboo sticks and *Garamut* drums. The scene would take place in the ritual enclosure of the Malagan ceremony (typically occurring at the moment of the transfer of rights to the Malagan carvings). They also danced publicly in the middle of the village to mark the last chapter of the funeral feast, serving the same purpose as Tatanua masks.

#### EARLY NEW IRELAND FINDS

After 1850, energetic exploration, contacts, and trading developed in the South Seas. For instance, the Hamburg-based company J. C. Godeffroy & Sohn had a large fleet of twenty-seven trading vessels going from island to island. They traded in many kinds of products, including curiosities and ethnographic artefacts. The British, after the establishment of their Australian station in 1859, also patrolled the South Seas, searching for new opportunities. In 1872, the *HMS Blanche* under Captain Simpson explored New Britain and New Ireland; It was followed by the *HMS Challenger* expedition in 1875. Contacts were sporadic, mostly exchanges on the beaches, or on the ships if local people approached in canoes. After 1875, contacts became far more regular, with the establishment of stations on the northeast coast of New Ireland (from Nusa to Kapsu) and of the Georges Brown mission on the west coast in central New Ireland. As a consequence, the majority of the collected artefacts were often from the Northeast of New Ireland, or from the Southwest Coast, but some also came from other landing points on the island. We do not know where this artefact was collected, but since it was deposited in 1880, we could consider it as from the "first contact period," from the very earliest trade exchanges or from early exploration ships.

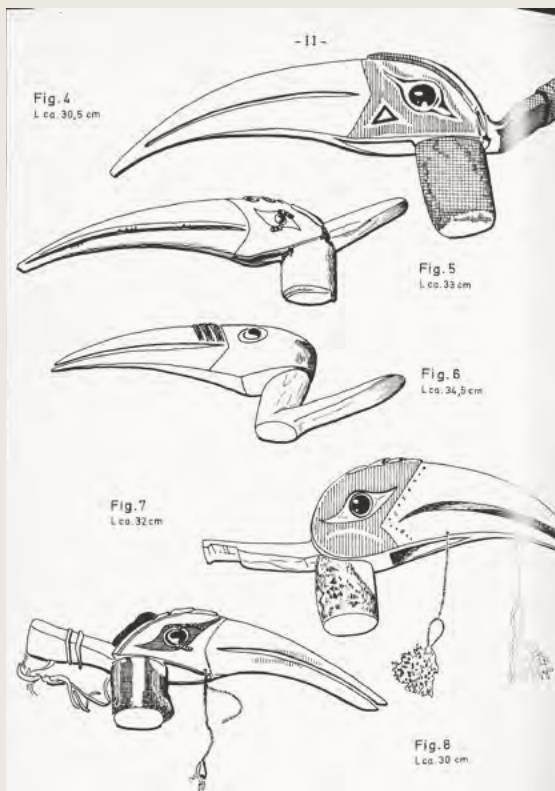
We know little about Appleton Sturgis. He was an enthusiastic patron of the American Museum of Natural History and was mentioned regularly in their annual reports from the late 19th century. In 1891, he sold them a "Collection of Pacific Island Life," composed of 2200 specimens for \$2000. Page 12 of the annual report reads:

*"The collection gathered by Appleton Sturgis, illustrating the island life of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, surpasses all the combined public collections of this class in the country. This was purchased by the Trustees in the early portion of the year. These collections, conjointly with the Emmons and Bishop Collections, form the most complete, attractive and instructive assemblage of ethnological material in this country."*



*A dancer holding a Vatlam Hornbill mouthpiece in Hamba village on February 23, 1909. Photo has been taken by Elisabeth Krämer. © Institute of Historical and Cultural Anthropology, Universität Tübingen. Detail of photo 1462.*





Extract from the thesis of Dieter Heinze, 1969:  
Fig. 4 (Basel Vb 10 907) and Fig. 5 (Basel Vb 10 908),  
collected in Tabar by Alfred Bühler in 1931.  
Fig. 6 (Basel Vb 10 596), collected in Komalabu, Central West  
coast New Ireland, by Alfred Bühler in 1931.

He continued to provide artifacts to the museum in the following years until his death in 1900. We do not know how he acquired his collection of highly diverse art from the South Seas, with such a strong Papua New Guinea representation (in particular, items from the Bismarck Archipelago).<sup>1</sup>

#### PLACE IN THE CORPUS:

About half of these dance implements are carved in the shape of a Hornbill head and some are actually dried hornbill heads. There are some variations in style, but most of them are carved in *Alstonia*, with *Turbo Petholatus* sea snail shell *opercula* eyes. Usually they have a carved wooden peg just on the occiput, at the back of the head, just like the Arthur Bässler Hornbill *Vatlam* Mouthpiece (Hamson, 2019, no. 25). The dancers bite it during the dance, so that it is held firmly. Often, we can see traces of bite marks on such artefacts. However, a few of these hornbill-head dance implements, including the Appleton Sturgis *Vatlam*, are different. We know such variations were observed in Komalabu (west coast of central New Ireland) and the Tabar Islands. It could of course exist in other parts of New Ireland as well. These have a long wooden peg at the base of the neck, instead of on the occiput. Technically, it is much

less convenient to dance with such an artefact held in the mouth because of the uncomfortable leverage it puts on the dancer's jaw when moving. (Since I own one of these, I tried it, and found it to be really inconvenient. The short peg is much more practical.) Moreover, my Tabar informant, Edward Salle, told me in October 2018 that some Hornbill dance implements with such long handles were not held in the mouth but in the hand, while having the same function as the others in Malagan ceremonies.

We also note that the Appleton Sturgis *Vatlam* has geometrical designs similar to one collected by Augustin Krämer much later, in 1909, in Lambusso village, while coming from the village of Hamba, twenty kilometers to the north. Notice the triangle with the pointing ends near the striped ovals.

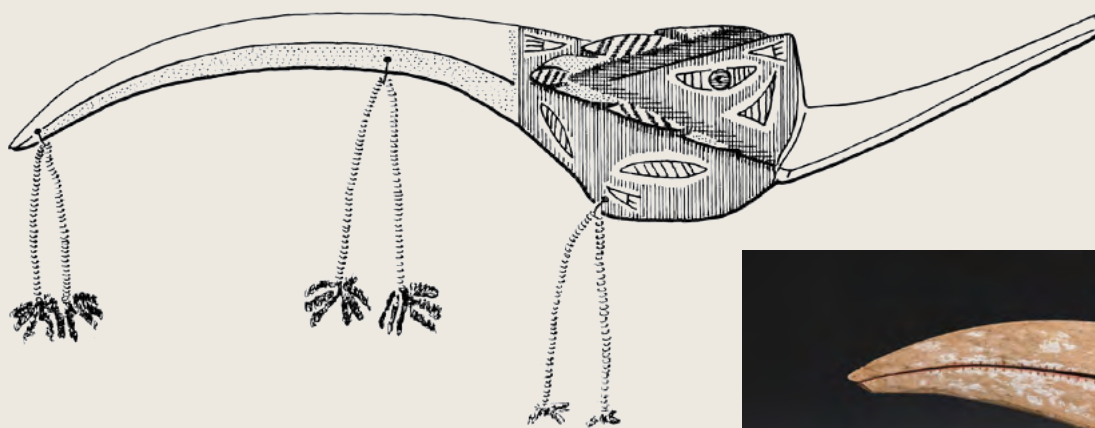
<sup>1</sup> As of today, there are still 2172 objects with Appleton Sturgis provenance in the Museum of Natural History. We note that 2129 from the Pacific, including 578 from Papua New Guinea. It is typical of a collection made during an exploration trip, and it is composed of lots of everyday artefacts. The collection is especially strong in the British New Guinea part, Papuan Gulf, Motu, and Massim. There are also artefacts from Matty, New Britain, Admiralty Island, New Hannover, and New Ireland. For New Ireland, there are 19 paddle clubs, 4 Kulap figures, various clubs of other shape, 14 New Ireland masks tatanua, few Malagan figures and Kipong masks. There are still 5 *Vatlam* dance implement, 3 with a hornbill head (ST/2244, ST/2246-2248), and two with a small composite creature (ST/ 2236 and ST/ 2237). The Appleton Sturgis *Vatlam* offered here was part of this series (ST/2245). They are all different.

When looking at the overall collection of artefacts, it corresponds to the places visited by the HMS *Blanche* during his 1872 trip under Captain Simpson command. Was Appleton Sturgis, or some of his relatives on board the HMS *Blanche*? It could be the source of the Appleton Sturgis collection, but it is not proven yet. More research is needed here.

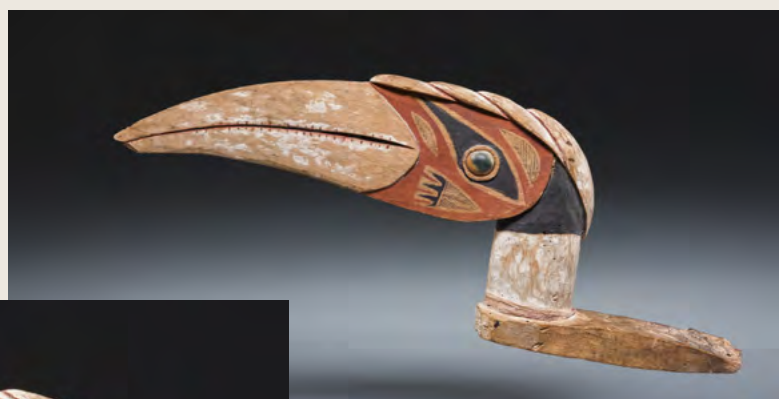
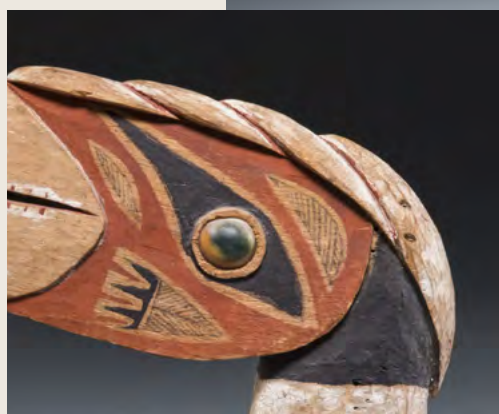


Hornbill dance implement collected on May 7, 1909, in Lambusso by Augustin Krämer after a Malagan ritual (Linden 84376). It has been carved by Bankerisi from Hamba village and brought there for the ceremony. Look at the geometric design around the eye, close to the Vatlam presented here.

Above: Vatlam collected by Arthur Bässler in Malom, 1887–1889 or 1891–1893  
Ex Linden Museum



Detail showing the Hamba/Lambusso Vatlam and the Appleton Sturgis Vatlams







Vatlam from Dunedin  
D 35.297 (D35.297; D 1935.0297)



One of five remaining Appleton Sturgis  
Vatlam at the American Museum of  
Natural History (ST12244)







One of five remaining Appleton Sturgis Vatlam at the American Museum of Natural History (ST/2247)

The three of five remaining Appleton Sturgis Vatlam at the American Museum of Natural History (ST/2237; ST/2240 and ST/2236)





## 6 Beasley Aitape Area Food Pounder

Aitape area, North Coast, West Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected by the Reverend Vernon Henry Sherwin between 1930–1933. Sherwin was an Anglican missionary with the Melanesian Mission stationed in Sag-Sag in West New Britain.

Acquired by Harry Beasley from Sherwin on 12 January 1934 (#3374)

John Wise Collection

J. J. Klejman, New York

Acquired from Klejman by Martin and Faith-Dorian Wright on 30 May 1967

Late 19th/early 20th century

18" (45.7 cm) in height

What I love about the food pounders from New Guinea's north coast around Aitape can be easily seen both in this piece and in the wonderful drawings of pounders collected by Otto Schlaginhaufen for the Dresden Museum between 1907 and 1909 that are illustrated in Oskar Nuoffer's article that David Rosenthal summarizes for this catalog. They have an endless variety of figurative compositions with whimsically exaggerated forms and seemingly lighthearted expressions. As Rosenthal notes, it is hard to interpret meaning or significance into these figures without true in situ ethnographic accounts—which Nuoffer did not have—but it is still easy to appreciate the imagination and technical skill of the artist.

In the present Beasley pounder, the figure is flexed for movement with a tall conical headdress, wide-open eyes, hands to the groin, and smiling with the tip of the tongue projecting from the mouth.





# Oskar Nuoffer and the Figural Taro Pounders Collected by Otto Schlaginhaufen on the North Coast of New Guinea in 1909

By David F. Rosenthal

From the late 1870s through the beginning of World War I, what is now the northern portion of Papua New Guinea was called Kaiser-Wilhelmsland and was under German colonial control. Ethnology was a burgeoning field at the time, and German museums and their directors were in heated rivalries with one another to obtain as many objects from their colonies as they could. The prevailing belief was that the cultures in these places were inferior and doomed to extinction, and that the interests of science were being served by documenting them and appropriating their objects as quickly as possible before they disappeared. The material culture of New Guinea and surrounding islands, and particularly of that part of the region that the Germans had authority over and ready access to, was remarkably diverse, and institutions actively sought and were granted both private and state funding in support of myriad and often very competitive collecting expeditions.

It was in the context of this frenzied race to acquire and the widely held conviction that the superiority of Western culture and the White race was scientifically provable fact, that Swiss-born ethnologist and anthropologist (and eugenicist) Otto Schlaginhaufen (1879-1973) became one of those charged with the task of finding objects in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago and bringing them to Europe. He traveled there extensively between 1907 and 1909, and collected some 1500 pieces for the Dresden Museum, for which he was working at the time. Soon after his return from New Guinea, in 1911, Schlaginhaufen left Dresden to accept the offer of a position as professor of anthropology at the University of Zurich in his native Switzerland, leaving the objects he had amassed to be described and inventoried by others, and notably by his colleague Dr. Oskar Nuoffer<sup>1</sup>.

In his monograph titled *Quetschkolben von Berlinhafen*<sup>2</sup> on pounders from the Aitape area (formerly Berlinhafen) on the north coast of what is now Papua New Guinea, Nuoffer examines the approximately ninety examples that he states “were among the many fine objects Schlaginhaufen succeeded in obtaining for the museum” in the course of his two-year trip. The sculpted tops of sixty-eight of these pieces are illustrated with line drawings on four plates at the end of Nuoffer’s article, and those plates are republished here.

Schlaginhaufen collected the pounders in the villages of Arup and Malol in the Jakumul and Ulau areas in 1909<sup>3</sup>. Only a few from the region had been known in Europe before then. How they were used had often been incorrectly explained, or in some cases they had been misidentified as either slit drum beaters or banana pounders. As Nuoffer correctly affirms, the objects were in fact used primarily to process cooked taro – and he points out that they were used more properly for squashing or

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1 Online searches reveal very little information about Nuoffer. He appears to have spent most of his career as an ethnologist working at the Dresden Museum and was still active there until at least 1925, when the book he is best known for, *Afrikanische Plastik - in der Gestaltung von Mutter und Kind (Maternity Figures in African Sculpture)*, was published.

2 The article first appeared in 1917 in *Abhandlungen und Berichte, Band XV*, a journal published by the Dresden Museum of Ethnology featuring texts on a variety of topics in each issue. “Quetschkolben” is a seldom used compound word that literally means “squish-piston”. The German words *Stampfer* or *Stössel* are much more commonly used for the English term “pounder”, but the author felt that they were not descriptive of how the pieces were actually used, for the reasons explained in the next paragraph of our text.

3 Schlaginhaufen did not himself publish a complete account of his travels and collecting activities in New Guinea and surrounding islands until fifty years after they were completed. He finally did in *Muliama, Zwei Jahre unter Südsee-Insulanern (Muliama, Two Years among South Sea Natives)*, Grell Füssli, Zurich, 1959, and describes collecting a large group of pounders and headrests in these places in Chapter 20, pages 202-206. He illustrates four examples of them in line drawings, figures 36 and 37. No additional information about them is provided, but he does refer to Nuoffer’s monograph.



Br. Golsler goz.





Br. Getalor ges.



mashing it rather than for actually pounding it<sup>4</sup>. Once made into a paste, the taro was blended with coconut milk. He adds that it “cannot be ruled out that these “mashers”<sup>5</sup> were occasionally used for the preparation of yams and sweet potatoes as well.”

It would be difficult to come up with a better example of the Melanesian predilection for the ornamentation of utilitarian objects than the taro pounders of New Guinea’s northern coast. Unlike the typically squat types from Polynesia and Micronesia used for similar purposes, the Aitape area pounders have an elongated shape, and are essentially cylindrical with a more or less thickened working end. The author describes and provides line drawings of morphologically similar pieces from Fiji, Buka Island, and the New Hebrides as well. He states that Schlaginhaufen’s examples vary in length from between 12.5 to 25 inches, and that they are nearly always decorated with a sculpted anthropomorphic or zoomorphic representation at the top of the handle end. This representation is usually of one or more figures (Janus figures in the cases of figures 7 and 8, plate 3), but only a head – animal or human (figure 16, plate 2 and figure 6, plate 3) – or two Janus heads (figures 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11, plate 4 among others) are seen on some examples. Occasionally, the ornament at the top of the pounder appears purely abstract (figures 12 and 15, plate 4 for example), and sometimes it is highly stylized but still appears to evoke an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic shape (figures 13 and 14, plate 4). In many cases, the sculpted figure displays both animal and human attributes (figure 17, plate 1; figure 18, plate 2; figures 10, 14 and 15, plate 3, among others). The figuratively sculpted part of the pounder typically takes up a quarter to a third of its entire length but may in some instances extend over as much as half of it.

Like many German ethnologists of his time, Nuoffer provides very detailed physical descriptions of the objects he investigates but delves less convincingly into the meanings and significance of sculptural works. While he expresses admiration and respect for the skill of the carvers who created the pieces, refers to them as “artists” and shows appreciation for both the aesthetic and technical qualities of their work, he makes only limited attempts to explain the importance that the pounders’ non-utilitarian dimension and their figural carvings might have had for their makers and those that used them. Part of the reason for that is certainly that reliable information on this topic would have been very difficult to obtain, particularly while sitting in an office chair in a museum in Dresden, but it remains true in general that the German ethnologists of the period, both in the field and in their institutions, spent much more time and energy on hoarding objects than on understanding their iconography and identifying the cultural contexts they were used in.

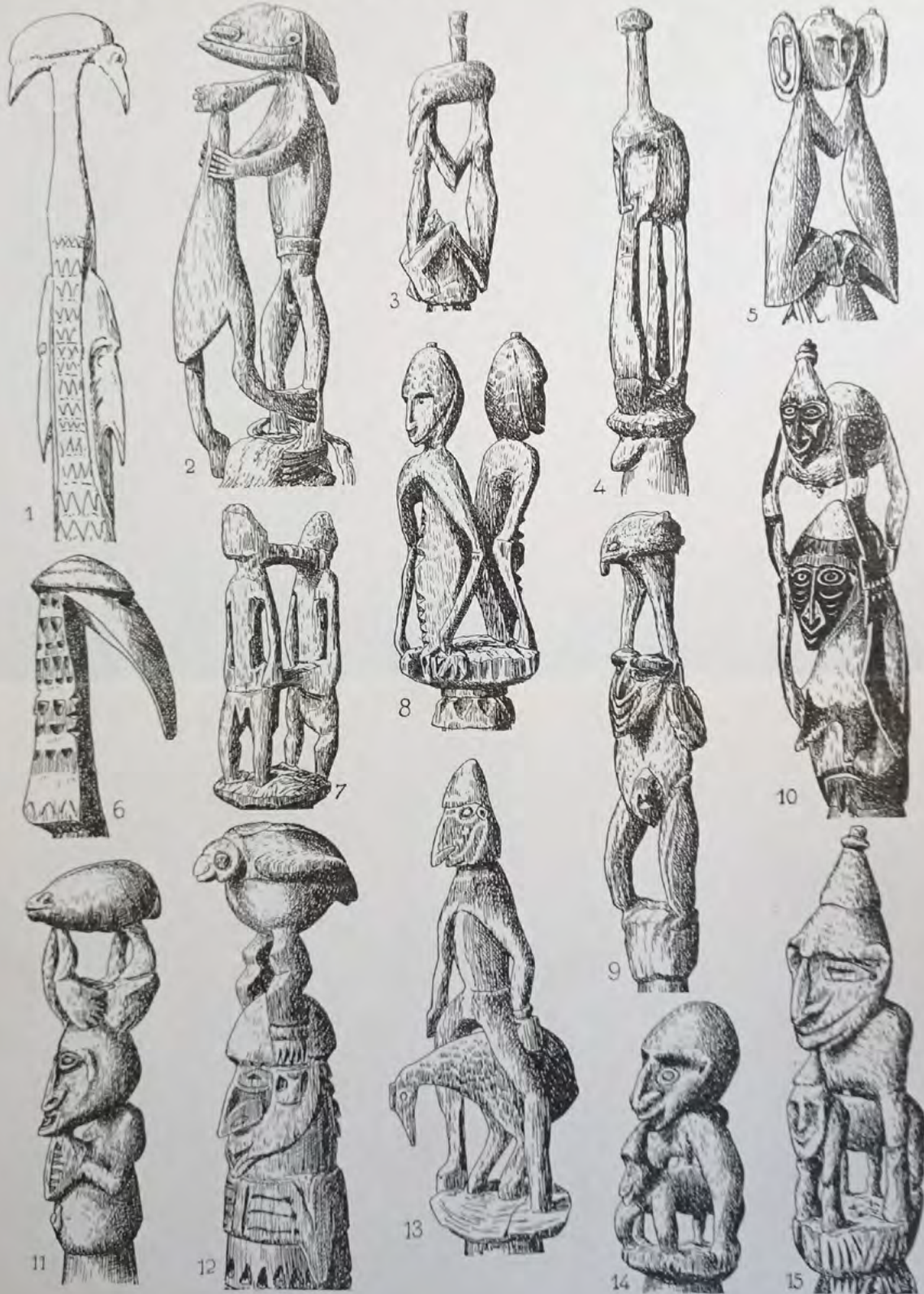
What there actually is in Nuoffer’s monograph on what or who the sculpted figures, heads and creatures on these works really represent must consequently be considered quite speculative for the most part. His assertions are based mainly on intuitive perceptions and are usually unsupported by any really solid evidence obtained through field work.

He does report that Schlaginhaufen was able to learn about myths that describe a fight between a man and a cassowary and the abduction of a man through the air and says that on the basis of “discussions [Schlaginhaufen] had with various groups”, the half-man half-animal creatures sometimes seen on the pounders probably represent “demons”. He concludes that there must be connections between the myths and the figures. Figure 2 on plate 3 for instance is described as the depiction of

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4 As can be seen on his collection label, Beasley erroneously identifies Michael Hamson’s piece as a sago pounder instead of a taro pounder – the mistake is often made. Nuoffer maintains that field observations proved that the pounders were not used for sago. He adds that they were far less common in the coastal areas like the Sepik River Delta, where sago and not taro are the main staple food.

5 Nuoffer’s clarification (see footnote 2) on how these objects were used notwithstanding, the English term “pounder” will be used in this text.



Br. Geisler ges.

a man in combat with a cassowary, and figure 13 on plate 3 is another example of a man interacting with a cassowary.

Nuoffer states that the artists of the area have a predilection for rendering instances of mythical human to animal transformation. He suggests that in cases where a figure displays characteristics of both, it is this process transformation that is being evoked. In cases where an animal is depicted superposed on a human figure or vice versa, the same kind of relationship may be implied.

Nuoffer also suggests that the gestures the figures make and the poses they are in must have significance. He admits to not always being able to decipher their meanings, but then does go on to offer what must ultimately be considered very subjective and really quite naïve explanations for some of them.

Some of the gestural language he observes “makes one think of a representation of sickness, pain or grief” (figure 9, plate 2 for example), and he suggests that some representations may be of physical deformities. On the other hand, he interprets some of the figures or faces as being “humorous” (the “smiling” face on one of the Janus heads of figure 7, plate 4 for example).

He further observes that the many of the figures seem to him to be masked, and that they are often shown wearing ceremonial decorative elements and headgear – the elongated cap worn by Michael Hamson’s figure would be an example. He contends that one can infer from this that they were rendered as they would have appeared at ceremonial events. He says that when a figure is rendered on all fours (figure 17, plate 1 for example) or with flexed knees (figure 1, plate 1), or in a contorted position (figure 18, plate 1), it is dancing, or involved in playing a game, like a pantomime. He notes that pantomime was a widespread activity at ceremonial events.

Finally, where a figure is seen with its hands to its genitals (figures 8, 9 and 13 on plate 1, the figure Michael Hamson presents here, or figure 1 on plate 2 for a female example) or engaged in what he calls “making obscene gestures”, he contends that allusion is being made to sexual activity. He goes on to declare that ceremonies “routinely devolved into wild orgies”.

Nuoffer notes that at the time Schlaginhaufen was collecting, examples of figural taro pounders of various styles but generally similar to those from the Aitape area were known from neighboring parts of the north coast, and in fact from as far west as Geelvinck Bay and as far east as the Finschhafen, Tami Island and New Britain areas. He mentions that he considers those from the Aitape region to be the most artistically and aesthetically developed of all known types, adding that pounders were completely absent from the far eastern portion of the island as well as from what was then British New Guinea to the south. Given Aitape’s accessible position on the north coast of New Guinea and the comparatively early date at which it consequently had initial contacts with Europe, it is reasonable to infer that it had also been subjected to influences of many kinds, including artistic ones, from neighboring areas by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Examination of the drawings in Nuoffer’s work indeed reveals a very wide spectrum of disparate style characteristics and elements in the pounders he depicts, and influences from the Humboldt Bay (figure 2, plate 2, and others) Lake Sentani (figures 9 and 12, plate 1), Sepik River (figures 13 and 14, plate 2, and others) and even Korwar styles (figure 15, plate 1) seem quite apparent in many of them. One cannot help but be reminded for instance, of well-known examples of figural sculpture from the Humboldt Bay area now in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden and the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam<sup>6</sup>, by the finely crafted figure on the example from the Beasley collection which Michael Hamson presents here.

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6 See *Art of Northwest New Guinea*; Greub, Suzanne; Rizzoli, New York, 1992, pages 68 through 73.



There is a great deal of ambiguity in Nuoffer's interpretations. Most of the figures, very much including Michael Hamson's piece, have characteristics that could allow them to be classified as belonging to more than just one of the categories he outlines. The characteristics he ascribes to those categories are moreover not necessarily clear, and what group a particular figure would fall into is in too many cases open to debate. There are also interesting omissions in Nuoffer's text – mention of the practice of ancestor worship for instance, which definitely does have connections with Melanesian figural representations, is absent altogether.

If we were to accept Nuoffer's interpretations without reservation, we would have to conclude that the beautifully carved figure on Michael Hamson's pounder is rendered dancing and/or attending some kind of ceremony and is preparing to engage in sexual activity. Perhaps we'd have to add that it appears to have a good sense of humor and be in a good mood too! That analysis is obviously not very cogent. It is simplistic and incomplete at best.

Nuoffer is undoubtedly right in a more general way when he affirms that many of the figures had connections with ceremonial activities, dances and games and that they referred to myths and mythical events in many cases as well. However, at the same time as one would be justified in making use of his interpretive efforts as a departure point for further study, it is unlikely that any of the more specific and detailed explanations he puts forward can really be trusted or relied on. Unfortunately, it will in the end probably never be possible to give a truly accurate and complete account of the incredibly rich and varied iconographic vocabulary that the Aitape region figural pounders collected by Otto Schlaginhaufen in 1909 display.



Dr. Geisler gez.

## Harry Geoffrey Beasley

18 December 1881–24 February 1939

By Hermione Waterfield



Harry Geoffrey Beasley. The obituary photograph from *Ethnologia Cranmorensis* No. 4, 1939.

Harry Beasley's distinctive oblong labels, with cut corners, "Beasley Collection" printed along the edge, attribution and ledger number, are well known to collectors the world over. There are also about six thousand objects distributed between the British Museum (2,123); the Royal Museum, Edinburgh (630); the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (98); the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (180); and the Merseyside County Museum, Liverpool (about 3,000). Although the Pacific was his main area of interest, Beasley also collected art from the Northwest Coast of North America, from the Arctic, from Asia (particularly Japan and Tibet), and from Africa—particularly Benin.

Harry Geoffrey Beasley was born in East Plumstead, Kent, on 18 December 1881 (registered 8 January 1882) and bought two Solomon Islands clubs, when he was just thirteen years old, in 1895. Thus began an obsession which was to last his entire life. He was able to indulge his passion because he had inherited the North Kent Brewery. In 1914 he married his cousin, Irene Marguerite Beasley, who shared his interests and with whom he had two daughters.

The Beasleys lived first at The Cottage, Abbey Wood, Kent, and then at Haddon Lodge, Shooters Hill in southeast London. In 1928, they moved to a house called Cranmore on Walden Road, Chislehurst, Kent, where they created the Cranmore Ethnographical Museum, with A.G. Madan as curator and Miss Joyce Gillet as assistant curator. Together they compiled the Cranmore Index on Pacific Material Culture, based on James Edge-Partington's Index for the British Museum, and by 1937 had about 60,000 references.

The museum produced a publication entitled *Ethnologia Cranmorensis*, the first volume of which appeared in 1937. Two followed in 1938, but alas only one in 1939, which contained the obituary of the founder. At the back of each issue were illustrated two or more items offered for exchange. As Beasley wrote in 1937: "The end of the nineteenth century was the golden age for collectors of Pacific and other specimens ... families whose relations had been engaged in Naval and other expeditions and voyages released artefacts into the marketplace. It is perhaps a good thing for students of anthropology that these areas have been more or less cleared, and that these specimens of man's handiwork, now obsolete, have found a permanent home in Institutions where their preservation is secured for all time under favourable conditions, and where they are available for study and comparison." Having written that, he goes on to recount, "I traced a Hawaiian cape to a small country museum to be told 'as the moth had got in it, it had been put in the dust bin.'" The Beasleys obviously hoped for a different future for their collections.

A letter with the Beasley papers is probably typical of the approach he used in contacting institutions: "As the tendency is nowadays for museums, with the exception of specialist museums like ourselves, to concentrate on collections of local interest, I should be glad to learn whether your Committee would consider the transference of these specimens to this museum where in conjunction with the extensive ethnographical series, I feel that they might be of more service to science, than as isolated instances. I would mention that I have a small purchase fund available for such acquisitions."

The ledgers reveal that the Beasleys also bought from dealers and at auction, but in the 1930s increasingly through contact with and from museums. They did not advertise in magazines. In Miles's obituary on his employer for the 1939 volume of *Ethnologia Cranmorensis* he wrote: "For Beasley it



was not merely the acquisitions of the object but the pursuit of them that held so much interest and in later life he would refer with pride to an object for which he had waited twenty years." He also remarked that Beasley was a great correspondent, never hurried, and took hours over the entries, labels, and display of the collection, making many of the stands in his workshop himself.

Beasley's appreciation of "series" found expression in a definitive book on fishhooks from the Pacific. Then there was the catalogue for an exhibition of combs in March 1928, which was to be enlarged and eventually published as a book. They bought hundreds of combs during the last year of Beasley's life for this purpose, but the project was never completed due to his unexpected death.

Harry Beasley died unexpectedly of diabetes on 24 February 1939, and his friend T. A. Joyce, curator of ethnology, arranged for the collection to be housed with that of the British Museum for safekeeping at the outbreak of the Second World War. Cranmore was bombed but thankfully the collection was saved.

The staff at the British Museum kept in close touch with Irene Beasley after the war. She had kept some of the collection, having distributed most of it by 1944. No doubt in recognition of their friendship with Joyce, Mrs. Beasley gave the British Museum many important pieces including an Easter Island "bird-lizard-man" and continued to offer gifts until 1971. Bryan Cranstone, William Fagg, and Elizabeth Carmichael always found her hospitable and were dismayed when dealers persuaded her to part with objects for a fraction of their value. The American, John Wise, exchanged an antler slave killer, an oblong Maori feather box, and much besides for a color television. Three other American dealers—Merton Simpson, J.J. Klejman and Allan Frumpkin—are mentioned in the ledgers. James Keggie was another visitor, and John Hewett never left her empty-handed.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jim Hamill, Student Room; Harry Persaud, Librarian, Department of Ethnology, British Museum; Beverly Emery, Librarian, Royal Anthropological Institute; and Michael Graham-Stewart.

*A view of the Pacific room at the Cranmore Ethnographical Museum, 1933.*





## 7 Beasley Massim Lime Spatula

Massim area, Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea

Henry C. Collyer, antiquarian/archaeologist and member of the British Anthropological Institute from 1888.

Acquired by Harry Beasley from Stevens Auction Rooms on 27 May 1924 (#1419)

J. J. Klejman, New York

Acquired by Martin and Faith-Dorian Wright on 30 May 1967

Exhibited in *Seafarers of New Guinea: Art of the Massim Area* at the Museum of Primitive Art, New York February 12–May 10, 1964, no. 42

19th century

14 ¼" (36.2 cm) in height

As with most of you, I have seen hundreds of Massim lime spatulas over the years. What drew me to this example was the pure, attenuated figure. It is as if the body and limbs have been pulled and stretched apart from their normal compact structure. As I have mentioned before, to me the mark of a great artist is his or her ability to both expand and defy our expectations. The extant shell and bead attachments are a beautiful reminder of the reality of how such pieces looked in the field—often as assemblages with accessories of symbolic, aesthetic, economic, and acoustic significance.





# Life History of a Massim Lime Spatula

By Richard Aldridge

Joseph knew the old spatula had not been used for chewing lime for generations. These days he kept it carefully folded in a piece of cloth tucked carefully into the rafter of his house slightly to the side of the cooking fire. Despite being wrapped the decades of smoke had seeped into the surface of the spatula and given it an unmistakable patina.

It was one of Joseph's family heirlooms and had a long history and he knew the object was enchanted. The spatula, or kena, was also concrete evidence that his family owned a small portion of the beach on Kiriwina. He had visited that beach as a small boy and his father had shown him the area, pointing out the geographical features that defined the small property his family owned. He remembered his father talking to the Kiriwina people and giving them the ownership story of the land. He told them of an ancient fight between clans and how his grandfather had accepted the beach to compensate for his brother's death because it was a good place to construct canoes. Usually, such compensation would have been through greenstone axes or shell currency, but it had been a bloody battle and the losing tribe had run out of all the shell valuables. There was a short dispute over Joseph's father's story of ownership, but, when his father had brought out the spatula, all arguments ended. It was the physical proof of this history. The beach was recognized as rightfully being his land.

The spatula itself depicted the dead body of his great-grandfather. Mosi, a famed Kiriwina carver, had depicted his great-grandfather in the squatting position. Back in those days they did not bury the dead as was the proper and Christian thing to do but instead took the bodies to a secret cave and bound the arms and the legs of the bodies to two sticks so the body would remain forever squatting staring back down the valley to the village. The head had a large wooden dish placed on it so that the body would remain dry even in heavy rain that caused the cave to seep. The squatting body was portrayed on the spatula as dried out with withered arms and legs.

Joseph's great-grandfather had come from Kiriwina and had been a renowned canoe builder and then later a Kula trader. It was on one of his great-grandfather's early kula trips he had met Joseph's great grandmother, fallen in love, and settled on Dobu.

Joseph had been a Christian all his life, but he knew the spatula was full of heathen black magic. His grandfather had told him how he could call his great-grandfathers' spirit from the dead to help calm the seas before a long canoe voyage by rubbing the figure's back and saying a heathen prayer. Unlike his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him Joseph was not a Kula trader. He was a mission teacher and a Christian and had refused to worship the false idol or learn the heathen magic.

His grandfather had brought the spatula back to Dobu knowing it was title to his land on Kiriwina and in memory of his father who had taken the spatula on every kula trip he had made. The legend of his grandfather chewing lime and betelnut, using that spatula, and spitting buia spray onto the wind while evoking his father's spirit to calm the sea he was a story Joseph had heard hundreds of times.

But those days were long past.. Joseph would never sail in a canoe when he could easily catch the mission's steam ship. The power of the spatula could only be accessed by heathen incantations he had never learned. The idea that someone's spirit could be called back from the dead to calm the seas did not sit well with Joseph's belief in Christ, God, and heaven.

A friend of the white pastor had been fascinated with the spatula when Joseph had shown it to him and offered him more than a month's salary for it. Joseph knew the times of violence and fighting had passed and that his ownership of the family land on the Kiriwina beach was well established. The spatula had little worth to Joseph other than a memory of his heathen great-grandfather whom he had never met.

Joseph decided to sell the spatula to the pastor's friend and got more for it than he thought possible. He was the first teacher on Dobu to own shoes, shirt, and trousers. In later years he would always attribute his rapid rise to headmaster and then to his position as district coordinator to his fine appearance from these new clothes.



## 8 Upper Karawari River Cave Figure, Aripa

Inyai-Ewa culture, Upper Karawari River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected by Lynda Cunningham, early 1960s/70s

Michael Steinberg Collection, Beverly Hills, CA

Published in *Michael Hamson Oceanic Art*, Paris 2018, no. 21

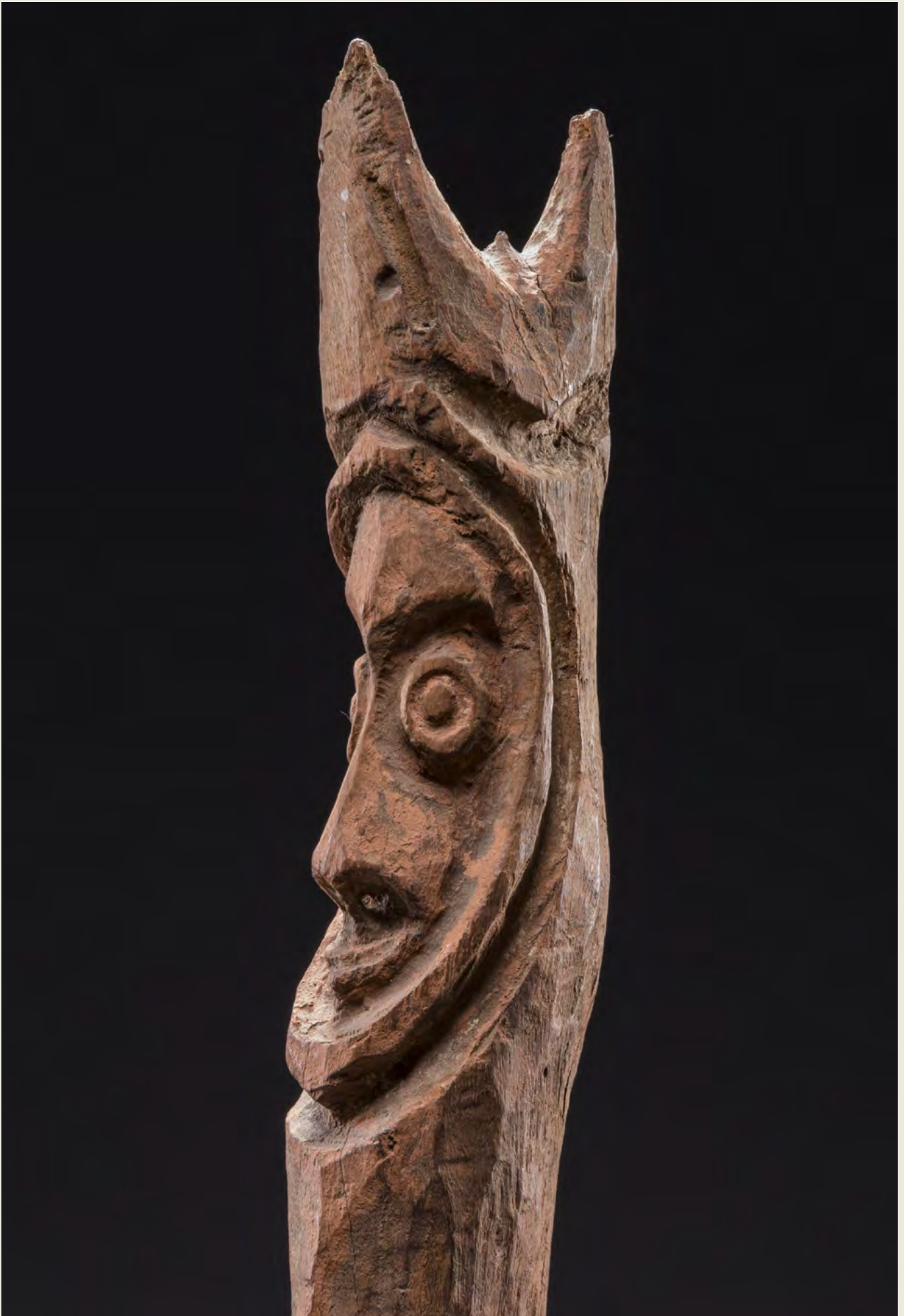
19th century or earlier

28" (71.1 cm) in height

Lynda Cunningham was one of the first serious female field collectors in New Guinea in the 1960s/70s, having made 18 trips to some of the more remote areas such as the Boiken, Ramu River, and Upper Karawari regions. This cave figure is of the most archaic in nature, with the rough-hewn surface quality from stone adzing combined with a clear, deeply cut expression still powerful after more than a century of exposure under the rim of a limestone cliff edge deep in the rainforest. Aripa were under the control of senior clan members, who would venture out to the caves prior to hunting or warfare to petition the ancestral spirit for its guidance and benevolence in the upcoming endeavor. The present figure is unusual for having a strong coat of red pigments still extant.







# Lynda Cunningham

By Paul Lewis

Motivated by a desire to study other cultures before they were irretrievably changed, in her mid-20s Lynda Cunningham decided to take a job with American Airlines – which enabled her to travel cheaply – and set out for Papua New Guinea. The first trip in 1966 crystalized Lynda's passion for the art and people of New Guinea and Oceania, and many other trips followed over the next 25 years. For Lynda it was crucial to try to relate to and understand the cultures of the people from whom she acquired objects. In 1972 she held an exhibition in New York entitled *Ancestors and Dream Time People: Art of New Guinea, the New Hebrides, and Australia*. In the exhibition catalogue Lynda wrote of the importance to her of recording 'the usage of the objects as they were explained to me.' Among other objects which Lynda collected in situ are a Hunstein Mountains hook figure in the Jolika Collection at the de Young Museum, San Francisco (Meyer, *Oceanic Art*, 1995, p. 264), and the Korewori River slit gong on view in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (acc. no. 2013.603), which Lynda gifted to the Museum in 2013.



Alongside the first-hand knowledge acquired through her work in the field, Lynda has a passionate interest in the books and historical documents which explore the art and history of world cultures. In her New York bookstore and gallery, Oceanic Primitive Arts, one could find a rare first edition of Bougainville's *Le voyage autour du monde* alongside the Kanak roof finial from his collection, which Lynda acquired from the George Ortiz auction at Sotheby's in 1978. Displayed among the latest publications and historical rarities were both objects which Lynda had collected in situ, and pieces from the great collectors.

Lynda sold the book business in 1987 and a few years later would largely retire as an active dealer of oceanic art. She remained an advisor, a keen observer, and a collector, occasionally adding pieces to her collection, for example, the Hooper huaki, the magnificent Maori Chief's Cloak which is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia (acc. no. NGA 2007.616). Lynda pursued other interests – her love of nature, and the Craftsman furniture which complimented the beauty and integrity of her collection of Oceanic Art. Above all she never lost her enthusiasm and passion for the forms and meanings of Oceanic Art, and her understanding of what these objects meant to the people who made them.



## 9 Van Lier *Korwar* Figure

Waigeo-Ajau Islands, Raja Ampat Archipelago, West Papua  
Probably collected by the protestant missionary Freerk Kamma in the  
mid-1930s

Theo van Baaren

Leendert van Lier

Christie's Amsterdam, 15 April 1997, lot 184

Illene & Jerry Liebowitz Collection, New Jersey

Late 19th/early 20th century

9 3/8" (24 cm) in height

I love the restrained expression on this korwar with its overly large head modelled after what van Baaren surmises is a Portuguese helmet—probably the flanged sallet type. The body is decidedly diminutive with an armless torso and tiny bent legs. The surface is worn and smooth with a warm honey-brown patina.



# The keepers of female figurine

By Fanny Wonu Veys

On Tuesday, 15 April, 1997, Leendert van Lier (1910–1995) had his collection of African, Oceanic, and Indonesian art auctioned off posthumously at Christie's Amsterdam. This female ancestor figure *korwar* constituted lot 184 in the sale.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I will trace the hands through which the figure passed, proposing a possible original collector and other owners of the objects.

## LEENDERT VAN LIER

Born in Amsterdam, Leendert van Lier was a successful expressionist painter and graphic artist of still lifes, landscapes, and village views. He combined his artistic expression with a passion for collecting, setting up his art dealing practice in 1950 at *Kunstzaal Van Lier*. The business was founded in 1927 on the Rokin in Amsterdam and centred around rotating exhibitions by modernist artists, including the magical realists Wim Schuhmacher, Raoul Hynckes, and Albert Carel Willink; neorealists Dick Ket, Edgar Fernhout, and Henry van de Velde; and expressionists Jan Sluijters, Charley Toorop, Hendrik Chabot, and Jan van Herwijnen. The work of these core artists was complemented with international artists such as Georg Grosz and Max Beckmann. *Kunstzaal Van Lier* also became known for its pioneering work in dealing in ethnographic art mainly from Africa and Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Although Carel van Lier (1897–1945), the founder of the gallery and a namesake, was not related to Leendert van Lier, the latter made use of the good reputation and international renown of the business.<sup>3</sup> The exhibition of paintings by former Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands in March 1951, and of work in September 1951 by the avant-garde painter Karel Appel, testifies to his wide-ranging taste. Still, he had a clear preference for modern early-twentieth-century art and ethnographic objects. Indeed, at the age of eighteen, Van Lier bought his first object, a Batak staff from Indonesia. At almost 85, this exact same object was the last one he sold.<sup>4</sup>

## THEO VAN BAAREN

Van Lier provided important Dutch collectors such as Theodorus Petrus van Baaren (1912–1989) and Cornelis Pieter Meulendijk (1912–1979) with their objects. Interestingly, this *korwar* came into the collection through Van Baaren whom Van Lier met at the art society *Kunstliefde* (Art Love). Ever since its founding in 1807, this Utrecht society has united artists and art lovers and is among the oldest art societies in the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup>

A poet, translator, theologist, professor, and artist, Theo van Baaren was a versatile personality. He studied Egyptology in Utrecht and developed his love for non-Western art when he met Van Lier through the *Kunstliefde* art circle. He focused mainly on West African masks and Pacific objects, which reflected his attraction to surrealism. The members of this art movement were fascinated with dream-like subjects and processes of transformation and felt these aspects existed in some ethnographic art, in particular that from the Pacific. Van Baaren and his wife Gertrude Pape (1907–1988) were active representatives of the surrealist art movement in the Netherlands, which led to the founding of the surrealist journal *De schone zakdoek* (The Clean [or Nice] Handkerchief).

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1 Christie's Amsterdam 1997

2 Warren 1997

3 Lier 2003

4 Warren 1997

5 Kunstliefde 2021





Leendert Van Lier. Copyright W. L. den Beer Portugael

In 1952 Van Baaren was appointed professor in Theology and Egyptian language and literature at the University of Groningen with a doctoral thesis entitled *Voorstellingen van openbaring phaenomenologisch beschouwd* (*A phenomenological appreciation of representations of revelation*). His appointment was controversial, because he examined religion from an anthropological viewpoint. Throughout his career he continued this approach, publishing widely about religions using oral histories for his analysis.<sup>6</sup>

Van Baaren donated his ethnographic collection to the University of Groningen on 24 September, 1968, with the purpose of making the collection accessible to a wider audience. Oceania was best represented with 999 pieces; then came West and Central Africa with 764 objects; 198 originated from Indonesia; and 92 items hailed from North and South America. Another reason for donating his collection was that its size had outgrown the capacity of his house. Every nook and cranny was filled with objects. On 16 June, 1978, the museum with his collection finally opened. Van Baaren named it after his faculty predecessor Gerardus van der Leeuw, professor of Comparative Theology and former Minister of Education. The choice for Van Der Leeuw was telling as he was one of the first scholars in the Netherlands to reject the assumption of western superiority.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Arnoldus-Schröder 1998: 7

<sup>7</sup> Arnoldus-Schröder 1998: 7–8

## THE ORIGINAL OWNERS

The *korwar* figure that ended up in the Van Lier collection followed an unusual route. Instead of first being acquired by Van Lier who then sold it to Van Baaren, this figure went from Van Baaren to Van Lier. Van Baaren had a special affinity with *korwar* figures, which is apparent from his book *Korwars and Korwar Style: Art and Ancestor Worship in North-West New Guinea* (1968). The two main chapters discuss consecutively the function and the morphology of *korwar* figures. Van Baaren would probably have identified this *korwar* as of the “Waigeo-Ajau Islands” [Waigeo-Ayau] type.<sup>8</sup> With its concave face, earrings, topknot, and large head with straight angular nose, the style of this *korwar* matches the description of Ayau *korwars* that Raymond Corbey gives in his book entirely dedicated to these early figures: “the Ayau Atoll korwars do not hold a shield, a small figure or snakes. ... In general, the female korwars have ear pendants. The nose is not arrow-shaped.”<sup>9</sup> The Ayau Atoll is part of the Raja Ampat archipelago and situated north of its main island Waigeo. In 1913 a Dutch government post was established in Sorong on the Bird’s Head Peninsula coast, which was used as a base for missionising in the area. In a letter dated 16 July, 1937, the protestant missionary Freerk Kamma (1906–1987) noted several *korwars* in his terms “heathen practices” that centered around ancestor cults and their images.<sup>10</sup>

## THE ORIGINAL COLLECTOR

It is unclear when the figure entered Van Lier’s collection. However, as the figure was not inventoried as part of the donation to the University of Groningen, it must have already been part of Van Lier’s holdings before 1968. The question remains of how Van Baaren got hold of the female *korwar*. It is known that the missionary and anthropologist Kamma acquired nineteen pieces on the Ayau Atoll in the mid-1930s.<sup>11</sup> Originating from Wierum, a small village on the Frisian coast, Kamma trained at the theological college in Oegstgeest, near Leiden and arrived in Manokwari, New Guinea in 1931 as a missionary from the Utrechtse Zendingsvereniging (the Utrecht Missionary Society). Soon he received his own post in Sorong and became responsible for its hinterland including the Raja Ampat islands, proselytizing in the area until 1942. From the start, Kamma had a keen interest in anthropology. In 1954 he submitted his PhD thesis entitled *Koreri Messianic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Culture Area*. This major contribution to understanding religious experience in northwest New Guinea was translated into English in 1972.<sup>12</sup>

Kamma had his collection shipped to the Netherlands and sold at least sixteen pieces to August Floris Charles André van Heyst (1887–1962), a Dutch collector from Rotterdam, who subsequently donated eight to the current Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam.<sup>13</sup> Van Heyst probably had personal discussions with Kamma when he was on leave in the Netherlands between July 1938 and January 1940. The result of these exchanges with Van Heyst’s personal consideration on the sixteen *korwars* was published in a 1941 article with the unusual title “Amfjanir,” referring to the correct name for *korwar* that Kamma had given.<sup>14</sup> I would surmise that this female *korwar* constitutes one of the three pieces that were never published, but that were collected by Kamma and sold to Theo van Baaren. Moreover, it shows great similarity with figures currently held at the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (WM-28228, WM-28226). They were both donated by Van Heyst in 1937 and collected by Kamma in the mid-1930s.

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8 Baaren 1968: 77–78

9 Corbey 2019: 198

10 Corbey 2017: 5

11 Corbey 2017: 101; Heyst 1941: 193

12 Kooijman 1988: 412–413

13 Heyst 1941

14 Heyst 1941: 193

## PEDIGREE

This female ancestor figure originated in the Ayau Atoll where it was probably made to commemorate a deceased family member. The protestant missionary Freerk Kamma collected this figure on one of his many visits to the area. Actually, the Ayau atoll constituted one of his favorite areas, of which he greatly appreciated the beauty of its beaches and the intense silence.<sup>15</sup> The figure was probably sold to the poet, artist, and academic Theo van Baaren and finally ended up in the collection of the artist and dealer Leendert van Lier.

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15 Kamma 1959





## 10 Papuan Gulf Shoulder Shield

Coastal Namau culture area, Purari Delta, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected by Australian Army medic Allan Henrey Skiller in the 1940s

By descent through the family

Late 19th/early 20th century

16" (40.8 cm) in height

Shoulder shields are some of the rarest forms of Papuan Gulf art. Generally rectangular in shape, with a cut out at the top, so the shield fits under the arm to protect the side of the upper torso facing the enemy when the bow is pulled back to launch an arrow. Predominantly, the shields feature a spirit face that probably provided both magical-protective and offensive-empowering properties. As is thought to be the case, the formidable spirit is then believed to walk in front of the warriors, leading them into battle.









## Allan Henrey Skiller, Australian Army Medic & Collector

By Michael Hamson

Allan Henrey Skiller was an Australian Army medic who travelled extensively within New Guinea during World War II, and who stayed on after the war until 1956 operating a copra plantation in Milne Bay Province. During his stay in New Guinea, Skiller collected tribal artifacts from the Papuan Gulf and Massim region.

As a member of Australia's 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Skiller saw combat in 1942 in the defense of Port Moresby against Japanese forces—mostly along the infamous

Kakoda Track, that treacherous mountain path cutting across the Owen Stanley Range from New Guinea's north coast to Port Moresby in the south.

Once Skiller's superior officer found out that he could type, he was taken away from general combat to become the officer's assistant. Later, in the madness of war, it was Skiller's prior employment as a pharmaceutical salesman that steered him into a six-week medic's course. The first artifacts he collected were given in appreciation for the medical treatment he freely administered. His son Phil remembers hearing his father's tale of amputating a local's gangrene-infected leg while reading up on the procedure in his medical handbook by the light of a kerosene lantern.

After the war Skiller decided to stay on in New Guinea. Initially he managed a trade store on Samarai Island for two years. Later he took over the land lease from the London Missionary Society of a copra plantation in Lawes Bay on the very south coast of Milne Bay Province. Excepting a return to Melbourne just long enough to get married in 1949, Skiller stayed another seven years. His son Phil said his father remained in New Guinea because he loved the people. Yes, he collected artifacts and ran a successful business, but it was the New Guinea people that drew Allan Skiller to the country. I think the accompanying photographs attest to that ease, comfort, and well-being he seemed to feel there.







*Photographs of and by Allan Skiller  
circa 1942-1949.*







## 11 Massim Figure, Ex. Valentine Museum

Massim area, Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea  
 Acquired in 1901 by Ellie Boshier in Australia  
 Donated to the Valentine Museum by Boshier in 1904 (V04.06.02)  
 Deaccessioned by the Valentine Museum in 2021  
 Late 19th century  
 19  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (50.1 cm) in height

This figure definitely belongs to a small corpus of late 19th century Massim figures potentially carved by the same hand. Older, authentic freestanding human figures are exceedingly rare within the Massim culture. Of the few with recorded functions, they all had to do with protective magic. One in the British Museum that was collected by Ellis Sillas in the Trobriand Islands in the 1920s was accompanied by a note card that read:

*The wooden images (Tukwalu) were carved as protection against evil magic. A man expecting assassination would place one of these figures at the head of his bed. The figure was presumed to possess the power of jumping up and killing the assassin. What is more probably is that the image was taken to a sorcerer and evil magic was performed over it and when the assassin saw the figure he was afraid of the evil magic and retired. Harry Beran unpublished article entitled "The Human Image in Massim Art."*





## The 117-year-old Orphan—Bosher Massim Figure, Valentine Museum

By Michael Hamson

When a museum object loses the tether of its acquisition history, it is in danger of being cast off as undocumented property. Such is the case for the present Massim figure recently deaccessioned earlier this year by the Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia.

Fortunately, once I had the piece in hand, I noticed the remains of a lightly penciled inventory number on the figure's back shoulders. This allowed the current museum's staff to research its original accession. It turns out that the piece was donated in 1904 by a beautiful young woman with a sad history.

Ellie Bosher was considered the belle of Richmond, Virginia, when she and her family left on a trip around the world in 1901. Her father was a wealthy man, president of the large T.C. Williams tobacco company.<sup>1</sup> The Massim figure was a gift to Ellie from one of her father's business associates she met while in Australia.

Three years later in January 1904, Ellie was visiting a friend in New York City when she caught typhoid fever and had to be placed in a sanatorium.<sup>2</sup> Her father, Robert S. Bosher, traveled to New York to be as close as possible to his daughter during her illness. While not allowed to visit Ellie due to her quarantine, he took up residence nearby. It was during this time, ten days after he arrived, that the cool weather took its toll on Robert Bosher, who first caught a cold and then pneumonia from which he died.

The name of Bosher's business associate in Australia that originally gifted the figure to Ellie is not certain, though it quite possibly may have been Arthur Scheidel, a German businessman and collector who lived in Sydney and travelled extensively around the Pacific, purchasing



*Ellie Bosher circa 1910,  
photo by F. J. Walsh*

*African Americans, mostly women, sorting tobacco at T. C. Williams & Company—Images collected by W.E.B. Du Bois & Thomas J. Calloway for the "American Negro" exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900*



1 At the turn of the century, Atlanta University sociology professor W. E. B. Du Bois compiled a series of photographs for the "American Negro" exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition, and a number of them were taken at T. C. Williams tobacco company.

2 This was most likely Riverside Hospital on North Brother Island, next to Rikers Island prison in the East River, that was home to Typhoid Mary, who died there in 1938.

3 In all, Scheidel made three donations to the museum, in 1899, 1901, and 1904, totaling about 300 objects, including scientific specimens, all accompanied by handwritten inventories (in English).

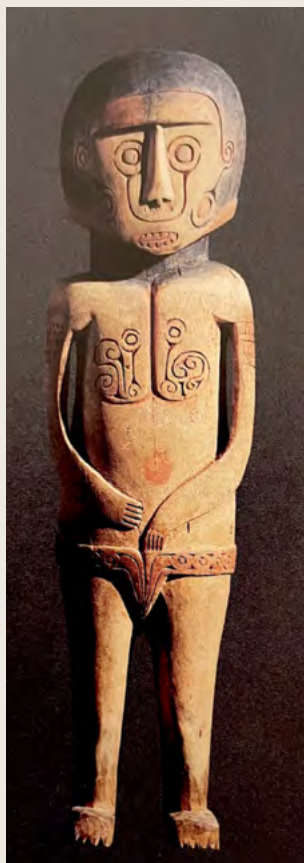
objects from markets and dealers. There is a remarkably similar figure donated by Scheidel in 1898 to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology at the University of Florence.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, illustrated in William Webster's catalog no. 28 from 1901 is another closely comparable figure with similar treatment of the mouth, position of both arms, distinct loin cloth, and rudimentary feet, which raises the possibility of its having been made by the same hand as the Bosher sculpture.

While it is often a mistake to project a perceived emotional state onto a tribal sculpture, when one knows the heartbreaking history of this piece it would be hard not to attach some significance to its tearing eyes and apparent distress.

*Group of New Guinea objects from W. D. Webster's Illustrated Catalogue of Ethnographical Specimens, No. 28, 1901*

*Massim figure in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology at the University of Florence, collected by Arthur Scheidel in 1898*



## 12 Solomon Island Canoe Prow Ornament, *Nguzu-Nguzu*

New Georgia, Solomon Islands

John J. Klejman, New York

Faith-Dorian and Martin Wright Collection, New York, acquired from above on  
29 May 1968

Exhibited in *The Art of the Pacific Islands*, National Gallery of Art, Washington  
DC, 1979

Published in *The Art of the Pacific Islands*, Peter Gathercole, Adrienne L.  
Kaepler, and Douglas Newton, Washington DC, 1979, p. 233, no. 15.18

Late 19th century

8 ½" (21.5 cm) in height

This Solomon Island canoe prow ornament is nearly unique in its facial structure. The common style has almost zoomorphic features with the lower portion of the face and jaw jutting well forward. The present prow is distinctly human in form with a more vertical composition that it shares with its distinguished counterpart from the de Havenon Collection illustrated by its side in *The Art of the Pacific Islands* exhibition catalog.







### 13 Iatmul Ceremonial Lime Container

Iatmul culture, Middle Sepik River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Jolika Collection of Marcia and John Friede

Wayne Heathcote, London

Irene Beard Collection, London

Pre-contact, stone-carved, 19th century

29 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (74 cm) in length

The best Sepik River art, in fact the best New Guinea art, combines elegance and refinement with an unquestionable archaic quality. As with this ceremonial lime container there is a harmony to the repetitive curves and a sophistication in the balance between solid and void spaces. Yet, the creatures themselves have an almost prehistoric feeling, the carved edges are worn smooth from age, and the pigments, often magical, are applied in thick layers. Hints of the dark, glossy patina show through where the pigments have worn away.







## latmul Ceremonial Lime Container

Christian Coiffier (Lecturer at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris)

Betel chewing (*kesserangu*) plays an important role in the latmul culture of Papua New Guinea. It is in fact intimately connected with the spiritual and ritual life of the local people. This is especially true of lime, one of the betel chew's three components, along with Areca nuts (*Areca catechu*) and the betel blooms (*Piper betle*) which constitute its active ingredient. This lime obtained from burnt shells of freshwater mussels was formerly stored in various kinds of containers made from hollowed out and dried gourds, bamboo segments or pottery. Betel chewing causes a kind of intoxication that is believed to enable a man to communicate with his ancestors. The container presented here is called *mbandi yavu* (lit. initiate/container) in the Middle Sepik River area. It is very similar to the oldest known similar objects (Reche, 1913: 263). This particular type of container was not used on a daily basis, but only during the final stage of the young men's initiation ceremonies. This *yavu mbandi* consists of three main parts: a bamboo tube (*kain yavu*) that contains lime and a wooden sculpture that functions as a stopper at one end of this tube. This sculpture is attached to the tube with a ring (*ao*) made of a woven rattan (*kuvu*). These three components and the materials they are made of have special local meanings. The bamboo tube is considered a vagina and the lime powder it contains is likened to semen. The rattan ring is an evocation of the umbilical cord. Some similar objects (Wardwell, 1971: 67) have a second rattan ring at the other end of the bamboo tube which is used as a loop for suspension. A small carved wooden cap (*ngungun*) then closes this opening of the tube through which users could bring out the lime for their chew with help of a stick or spatula (*tàp*) made of wood or cassowary bone. The upper part of this spatula was most often carved in the shape of bird's or cockatoo's head. The wooden carving was then facing downwards and this inversion probably had a special meaning. Warriors who had killed could hang red and white feathers attached with chains of rattan rings to the carving and that indicated the number of enemies slain. A myth evokes how the spatula of the Suikumban warrior pig ancestor led to dividing humanity into two halves: *nyawinemba* and *nyamenemba* (Coiffier, 1994: 812). This is how dualism among the latmul became more of a factor in the organization of their society as well as a key concept in the creation of numerous objects in their material culture.

The wooden sculpture is an evocation of the young initiate's dual ancestor spirits (paternal and maternal) called *wagan*. The object is, as a whole, a guarantor for the transmission of the family lineage's strength and fertility. It was prepared and given to the new initiate by his *wau* (maternal uncle) on the day of the initiation cycle's closing ceremony. The young man could then parade in front of all the village members, adorned with his most beautiful finery, on the dance area in front of the large ceremonial house at the top of whose facade the iconic bird-man gable figure presided. The *mbandi yavu* was an object of prestige that could sometimes be transmitted from generation to generation.

There are a number of quite similar *mbandi yavu* in museums and private collections (Luschan, 191: fig. 23, 24 and 25; Kelm, 1966: 428-429 and 432 to 437; Greub, 1985: 42; Kjellgren, 2007: 86; Conru, 2014: 120-121), but not all of these objects are of the same aesthetic quality as the one presented here. The birds can be different, rooster (*nyaaka*) or eagle (*ngawi*), as seen on two containers from the collection of the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia (Linton and Wingert, 114). Sometimes the bird may have a crocodile head (*nambu waal*) with an eagle beak (Herreman, 2008: 60). This latter example indeed represents a mythical half-crocodile half-

bird chimera. It can be quite difficult to define exactly what type of bird is represented because the head can have varied characteristics – a hornbill beak for instance with the crest and crop of a rooster. Several specimens have the beak of a great frigate bird (Kelm 1966: 428), but the majority of known pieces clearly represent rooster heads (Howarth, 2015: 152-153). Could it be that there is a relationship here with the gift of a rooster to his *laua* (sister's nephew) by the *wau* during certain *naven* rituals? The presence of chimeras is common in latmul mythology. There are myths about a female crocodile that lays two eggs. A half-eagle half-crocodile chimera emerges from one of them, and a crocodile from the other (Coiffier, 1994: 1096 and 1102). This present object may be an evocation of a myth related to initiation, whose public revelation is strictly forbidden because initiation practices are still widespread in a number of Middle Sepik villages.

On our *mbandi yavu*, the very aesthetic junction between the body of the crocodile and that of the bird whose tail seems to prolong the latter forms an almost closed loop. This is not always the case, as can be seen in the Cranmore Museum specimen (Firth, 1936: 60). On some specimens the end of the crocodile's mouth is connected to the middle of the bird's chest (Schlaginhaufen, 1910: 49; Chauvet, 1930: 89; Gianinazzi and Giordano, 1989: 169) where the wishbone, an eminently "dual" bone, is located. In latmul representations the loop evokes, in the abstract sense, the primordial spirit *wagan*. The general shape of the sculpture looks something like the letter S. This representation, often used in latmul sculpture and painting, is a symbol that can be compared to the Chinese *yin* and *yang* design.

The bamboo tube can be engraved with various designs, including W-shaped patterns similar to those scarred onto the bodies of initiates (Herreman, 2008: 60). The ring is not only a connecting element, like the umbilical cord between the placenta and a fetus, but in fact also represents a nest from which the chimera escapes. This is not surprising since female crocodiles, like birds, build nests using plant materials. In addition, many rings of old objects had one to three *yapma* collars (Appel, 2005: 82) that made the attachment of cassowary feathers possible (Peltier et al., 2016: 246).

The different designs on the body of the wooden sculpture are painted with white and red pigments on a black background. These are the colors that belong to each of the two halves that structure village society but also the emblematic colors of the cultural hero Moïem. Different techniques were used to prepare the various pigments. The black color *nguel kepma* (*nguel*: ash, *kepma*: earth) was obtained with clay and various wood ashes mixed with chicken blood in water (Coiffier 1994: 1192) and was applied with a brush made of coconut fibers. The white color (*saoun kepma*) came from a dilution in water of powder from charred mussel shells or from kaolin collected in caves near the village of Kaningara. The ochre-red color (*besik kepma*) was prepared by dilution in water of a powder obtained from wood knots burned on a fire for several hours (Coiffier, 1994: 1187-1187). Chewed *Hibiscus tiliaceus* stems were used as brushes for painting the different designs. In some cases only the hollow parts of the champlévé carving were coated with white lime powder and the flat surfaces were painted in ochre-red. The floral pattern represents the hibiscus flowers painted on the upper part of the wings. These red or white flowers are emblems of the two halves that make up latmul society and this explains their presence on many specimens of *mbandi yavu*. The five holes along the ridge of the bird's back were used for the attachment of cordage made of sago palm leaflets tinted in ochre-red. Such cords could be attached to other parts of the object as well (Gianinazzi and Giordano, 1989: 169).

The manufacture of these objects was reserved for men only and each of them, or rather their clan, possessed a kind of copyright for certain subjects and designs used in their artistic creations. The rights to various patterns could however be acquired, particularly on the occasion of weddings. The talent of





some artists was recognized by their village community and sometimes their reputation was more than just local. These sculptors were initiated men who learned the esoteric meaning of their own designs from elders of their clan, but they could still give free rein to their imagination within the context and the limits of specific inspirations that everyone could understand. Their achievements were therefore a subtle combination of the characteristic design of their clan and their own personal creativity at a given time. This explains why none of the known *yawu mbandi* resemble one another very closely.

Similar birds, sculpted in the same way, are found on spear thrower ornaments, which are also part of the new initiate's ceremonial paraphernalia (Kelm, 1966: No.217-218-219-223-236, Appel, 2005: 82). But we also find these representations associated with crocodiles on flute stoppers (Menter, 2003: No.40), drum handles (Kelm, 1966: No.163) and on old canoe prows (Schlaginhaufen, 1910: 54-55; Wardwell, 1971: 71-72). It is unlikely that these animals were totemic emblems since few other species were represented on the above mentioned objects (Reche 1913: 263). It is more likely that they were emblems of the two halves that made up latmul society. This would seem especially likely since lime is said to be at the origin of the division of the cosmos into its two parts, *nyawi* and *nyame* (Coiffier, 1994: 812). Birds – rooster, hornbill and eagle – were associated with the sun and the *nyawinemba* half (sun people) while the crocodile was associated with the *nyamenemba* half (mother's people). And we know that these halves played a fundamental role in the organization of initiations (Schmid and Kocher-Schmid, 1992: 98). It is consequently likely that the *mbandi yawu* represented the unity of the community in the latmul culture.

#### ENDNOTES

1 The freshwater mussel (*swuli*) is a representation of the vulva (*ketnya*).

2 The word *yawu* is used to identify the vagina as well as a container.

3 The verbal form *gu-* means "plug a hole" (Staalsen, 1966: 17).

4 The rooster's clavicles are fused together to form a Y-shaped boned called the *furcula* in Latin, *l'os de voeux* in French and the *wishbone* in English.

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## 14 Keram River Mask from Crane Expedition

Kambot village, Keram River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected May 25, 1929, by Professor Albert W. Herre from Stanford University on the Crane Pacific Expedition

Butterfield & Butterfield Auction, San Francisco, 2 December 1992, lot 3129

Paul Harris Collection, Anchorage, Alaska

Early 20th century

27  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (70.4 cm) in height

Rectangular label on the reverse with: "Mask from Ambot, Kerame R, (Töpfer R) New Guinea May 25, 1929. AWH"

As I frequently advise my clients, age is determined by style, not patina. Patina is, in general, an untrustworthy diagnostic. A weathered, eroded patina can take a few years to develop with an object intentionally stored in the river or it can take centuries on a figure nestled in the recess of a limestone cave. Style, on the other hand, can be surprisingly definitive and precise in deciding age. The present Keram River mask, while lacking a juicy patina, has an early style that coincides with its 1929 collection date—which in itself is remarkable for its definitiveness and precision.







## Two Days in May 1929 on the Keram River

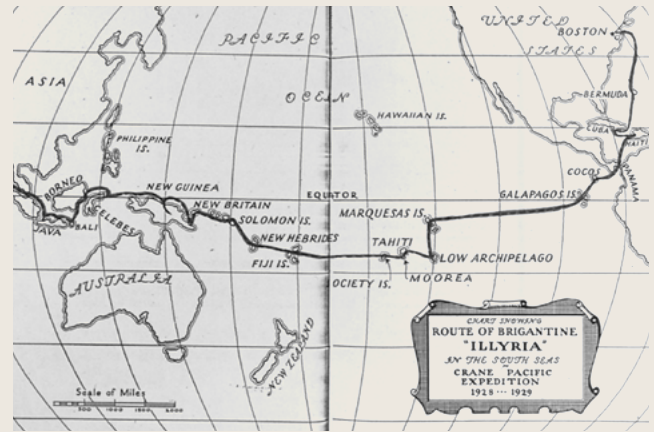
Virginia-Lee Webb, Ph.D.

The Crane Pacific Expedition was an around-the-world scientific journey lasting eleven months. It began in Boston on November 16, 1928, and returned to port in the United States on October 21, 1929.

The voyage got its name from the Crane family of Chicago, Boston, and Ipswich, who initiated the project and provided financial support. Richard Teller Crane Jr. (1873–1931) was head of the family and the Crane companies founded by his father. Richard was married to Florence (1871–1949), the daughter of Harlow Higinbotham who had been president of the World Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Richard and Florence had two children, a daughter also named Florence (1909–1969) and a son named Cornelius Vanderbilt Crane (1905–1962). It was Cornelius who provided the idea for the expedition and who would be its leader. The Crane family was philanthropic and supported the advancement of science, and Richard was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Field Museum, Chicago. In 1927, Cornelius was given a custom-built seafaring yacht named *Illyria*. Because of the family affiliations with the Field Museum, Cornelius presented the idea of a scientific expedition to the Museum's director, who enthusiastically supported the idea. Thus, the Museum would receive the collections gathered on the expedition, and several staff members were invited to participate.

The type of voyage Cornelius proposed was ideal for the Museum and would benefit several areas of research. Although Cornelius had philanthropic and scientific goals, a primary objective of his *tour du monde* was to visit the South Seas. He decided to mirror his multidisciplinary expedition after the routes taken by Charles Darwin in 1831 and by Darwin's "co-evolutionist" Alfred Russell Wallace, who traveled to the East Indies in the 1850s. Cornelius was aware of the Field Museum's prior scientific expeditions that went to the Pacific before him, especially the expedition to the island of New Guinea and surrounding islands by A.B. Lewis on the Field Expedition of 1909–1913.

After discussions with D.C. Davies, the director of the Field Museum, the preparation for the voyage began. Agreements, itineraries, and collecting priorities were set. As leader and sponsor of the expedition, Cornelius carefully selected the professionals and colleagues to accompany him. He required each individual be an expert in an appropriate scientific subject and be a "complete



Route of Crane Pacific Expedition

Cornelius Crane on *Illyria*

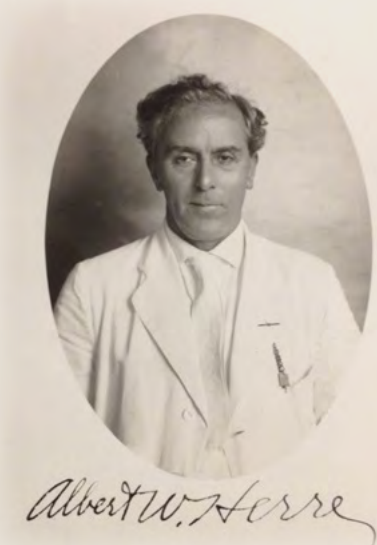


gentleman.” Cornelius was determined to assemble a congenial and academically superior group, and he wanted people who could work together at sea for nearly a year.

Sidney N. Shurtleff of Boston was Cornelius’s first choice to participate. Cornelius and Sidney were childhood friends in Ipswich. However, around the time of the expedition Sidney’s family changed their name to Shurcliff. Sidney was appointed the official expedition photographer. Cornelius invited his friend, Charles R. Peavy of Mobile, Alabama, who had attended Harvard and had sailing experience. Murry Fairbank was a pilot and mechanical engineer, and he proved to be a versatile and valuable member of the crew. Dr. William Lorenzo Moss from the staff of Johns Hopkins, Harvard University, and Boston Children’s Hospital was an ideal candidate. He’d received his medical training at the University of Georgia and did graduate work in Berlin. In 1916, he accompanied a Peabody Museum–

Harvard University-sponsored expedition to Peru. His expertise in epidemiology, tropical medicine, and his prior travel experience made him the ideal choice as physician to the expedition.

The first scientist recommended by W.H. Osgood, head of the Zoology Department at the Field Museum was his assistant curator, Karl Patterson Schmidt, an expert herpetologist. Frank Wonder was then selected by Schmidt to be his assistant taxidermist. Walt A. Weber, an artist studying at the University of Chicago, was recruited to help Wonder prepare all the specimens and to make drawings of the diverse flora and fauna. The final member of the scientific team, an ichthyologist, took a bit longer to find because there was nobody qualified at the Field Museum. But upon the recommendation of Stanford University’s president,



Dr. Albert William Herre

Raymond Wilbur, they selected Dr. Albert William Herre from Stanford, who supervised the collecting of fishes and marine creatures.

It was Dr. Herre who collected this mask. Albert William Herre (1886–1962) was born in Toledo, Ohio. He held various jobs and was a teacher, before his interest in the sciences led him to earn undergraduate degrees and his doctorate from Stanford University. He became Chief of the Department of Fisheries of the Philippine Bureau of Science and his academic reputation grew. He returned to the United States and became Curator of the Zoology Museum at Stanford University, remaining in that position for eighteen years. After the expedition, he continued to teach, and was later offered a position at the University of Washington Department of Fisheries, eventually becoming head of the Science Department at Western Washington University. Herre collected 12,000 fishes during the expedition.

The Crane Pacific Expedition’s participants sailed the globe and their various mandates came to fruition, creating nearly one thousand photographs, a 35mm silent movie film, and a collection of over 18,000 natural-history specimens for the Field Museum’s exhibit halls and de-

The Herre mask





ABOVE: Herre measuring fish on Illyria

partmental collections. They also individually collected sculptures, though it was not specific to the expedition's mandate. Among the objects that they collected, many were deposited at the Field Museum, and some went to the Peabody Harvard and Peabody Essex Museum. Some remaining objects, like the sculptures collected by Herre, remained in their private collections. The images, diaries, and log books provide details concerning when and where sculptures were collected.

After making many stops in the West Indies, Panama, Cocos Island, the Galapagos, Polynesia, Fiji, and Solomon Islands, the expedition reached Rabaul, New Britain on May 2, 1929, and met with residents who had lived in New Guinea during the German colonial period. The residents suggested that they visit Lae and take advantage of the airfield to capture aerial footage, which they did on May 4. In preparation for their trip up the Sepik River to New Guinea, they were told to contact the renowned missionary Father Franz Kirschbaum who had established the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) mission station at Marienberg in 1912.

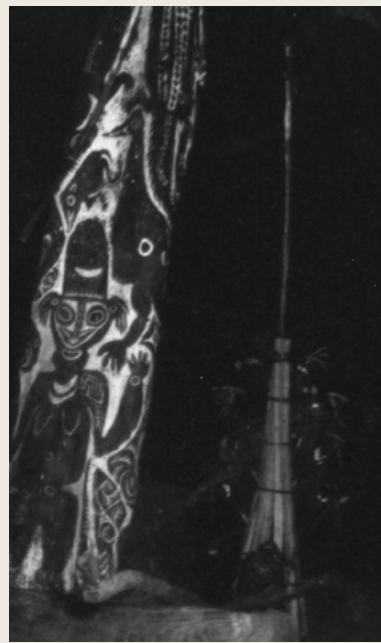
When they reached the island of New Guinea and the mouth of the Sepik River, they found Father Kirschbaum at the main SVD mission station at Alexishafen, and he agreed to be their guide on the Sepik and its tributaries. His expansive knowledge of the river, villages, and the populace—as well as his linguistic abilities and interest in local culture—was key to the expedition's successful river tour. Kirschbaum's long residence on the river and knowledge of the architecture and customs of specific villages prompted the expedition to visit the Keram River tributary on the lower part of the Sepik. On May 24–25, 1929, they visited three villages: Kambot (then referred to as Ambot), Geketen, and Gologopa (Gorogopa). Kirschbaum had seen a rare display of extraordinary boards decorated with feathers in the interior of a men's house in Geketen. But by the time the Crane Expedition arrived, the display of "feather mosaics," as they have been named, had been taken down. Luckily the display was previously photographed by Kirschbaum. In addition to several verbal descriptions, this is the only visual record of the display.

However, the visit to the Keram River villages did not disappoint. This tributary revealed villages with some of the most spectacular architecture, painting, and art in the region. Towering ceremonial houses lined the river with soaring, overhanging gables. The undersides of the gables were lavishly painted, as were house posts and interior and exterior panels marking second-story restricted spaces. The

BELOW: Expedition members







ABOVE: Painted house gable Kambot, photo by Karl Schmidt, Album Z6page124 Courtesy Field Museum, Chicago.

ABOVE CENTER: Interior painted posts, Kambot village, photo by Karl Schmidt, Album Z6page124 Courtesy Field Museum, Chicago.

RIGHT: Feather mosaics, photo by Fr.Kirschbaum, Courtesy Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Köln RJM-3344

BELOW: Kambot House, photo by Dr. Moss, Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art



interior spaces held displays of figures, masks, and shields decorated and painted in numerous media and motifs. While no feather mosaics were found in this village, the abundance of sculpture, unique architecture, and paintings was a high point of the visit to the Sepik region. It is in Kambot village that Herre found this mask. In fact, the painting on the mask is clearly stylistically similar to the painting throughout the village. Diagonally positioned, almond-shaped eyes connect to the narrow, pointed, vertical nose carved in relief. The volumes of the positive shapes and voids are emphasized by delicate linear circles painted in

white pigment. Faces, birds, crocodiles, and other clan designs are seen in the imagery of the painting in several Keram River villages.

The distances, obstacles, navigational difficulties, and other impediments did not hamper the results of the Crane Pacific Expedition. The documentation and visual records provide us with a glimpse through the mind's eye of what those explorers saw, and we get a glimpse of those two days in May 1929 on the Keram River.

1 Field Museum Archives, Chicago. Director's Papers, Expedition Correspondence, Cornelius Crane Expedition of Field Museum. Folder 2/18 Feb–July 1928. Letter from Raymond Wilbur 10 April 1928 to Dr. D.C. Davies Director Field Museum.

2 Biographical information was obtained from various sources including the Field Museum Archives, Chicago; and the Wilson Library, Western Washington University, Special Collections, Bellingham, Washington <http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv48403>; and "Who's Who in American History" vol.4, 1961–1968. Chicago. Marquis 1968.

3 Photos of the feather mosaic display are published in Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin. Kulthäuser in Nordneuguinea. Berlin. Akademie-Verlag 1989: 367 (Abb.117) and Waldmar Stöhr. Melanesien: Schwarze Inseln der Südsee. Köln. Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum für Völkerkunde der Stadt Köln 1971: 101 (Abb.177). The photos are flipped horizontally in each publication, and the image in Stöhr is darker with less detail.



## 15 Sawos *Mei* Mask, Masco Collection

Sawos culture, north of Middle Sepik River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected pre-1915 by the German colonial Dr. Hans Ewald Kersten (Inventory number 1641 painted in white on the mask's reverse)

Philip Goldman, London

Bruce Seaman, Bora-Bora

Wayne Heathcote, New York

Masco Collection, Detroit

Sotheby's New York, 15 November 2002, lot 138

David Rosenthal, San Francisco

Cathryn Cootner Collection, Sonoma

Published in *Island Ancestors: Oceanic Art from the Masco Collection*. 1994, no. 19, pages 66/67

Pre-contact, stone-carved, 19th century

15 ¼" (38.7 cm) in height

*Mei* or *Mwai* masks are classics of Oceanic art and one of the most iconic of Sepik River artifacts. This pre-contact example is one of the earliest I have encountered. The small nassa shells that would have adorned the surface are long gone, leaving the pure form of the mask underneath. There is an ancient, unadulterated feel to the composition that has been distilled into the basic piercing eyes that tail off towards the ears, the deeply pierced septum, and the nose that curves down below the chin tipped by an archaic bird's head. The surface is dark brown with traces of paint remaining.

There is not much information on Dr. Hans Ewald Kersten except that he began work in Madang (then Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen) on 24 July 1912. He transferred to Rabaul in August 1913, sent a shipment of ethnographica back to Germany in May 1914, and left New Guinea for good in June of 1915.









## *The Historical Evolution of Commercial Art Collecting*

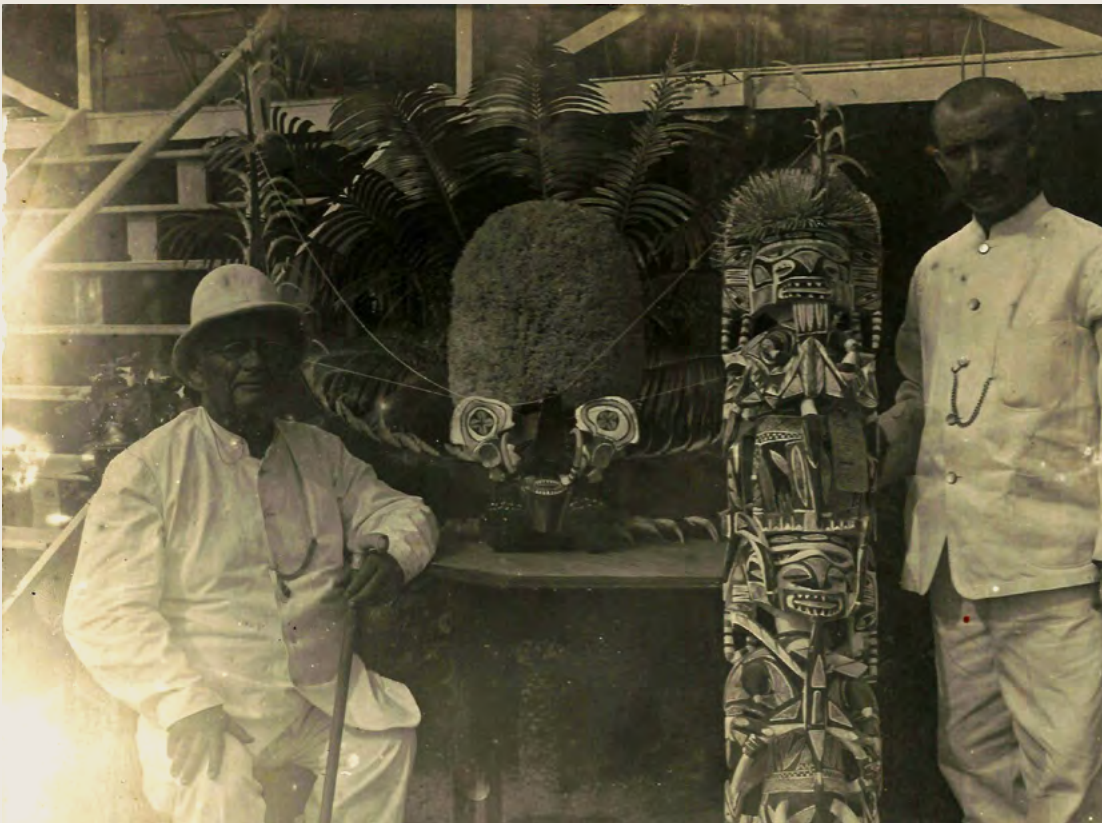
Rainer F. Buschmann, California State University Channel Islands

Corporate art collecting, including Oceanic material culture, went through several stages that included commercialization, investment, philanthropy, and, finally, a concern for human resources. The commercial investment in ethnographic collecting is almost as old as the activity itself. For instance, as numerous collections returned from James Cook's three voyages, many artifacts ended up in the enterprising hands of dealer/collectors who would then market the objects to interested clients. By the nineteenth century, especially in connection with natural-history specimens, dedicated dealers emerged in major Euro-American cities. As the rare "cabinets of curiosities" gave way to more specialized museum collections, the demand for exotic natural history or ethnographic specimens increased (Coote et al., 2017; Barrow, 2000).

In the nineteenth-century Pacific, a new experiment combined commercial and scientific inquiry. The J.C. Godeffroy & Son company, created by French Huguenot refugees in the northern German city of Hamburg, had successfully switched from its beginnings in the Atlantic to making money from coconut oil and copra in the Pacific. The founder of the company, Johann Cesar Godeffroy VI, opened a curated museum in Hamburg specializing in natural history and ethnography from the Pacific. To support this endeavor, Godeffroy contracted professional collectors, such as Johann Stanislaus Kubary and Richard Parkinson, to return specimens to Hamburg. To market duplicate objects, the museum curators created catalogs to sell items to individuals and institutions throughout Europe. But the economic downturn following German unification in 1871 was not kind to the Godeffroy company. By the 1880s, company officials had to liquidate the museum collection well below the expected price (Penny 2000).

Other companies followed Godeffroy's lead—most prominently, Henssler & Co. operating in the Bismarck Archipelago and the Marshall Islands. When this company expanded into the western regions of the Bismarck Archipelago in the 1890s, they obtained, besides the desired copra and marine resources, large numbers of indigenous artifacts, which they initially sold to passing tourists. When company head Max Thiel became cognizant that exporting objects to Germany would increase his profit margin, he put together a large cache of ethnographica and shipped it to Europe. However, once these artifacts reached their destination, Thiel received an unwelcome response from ethnographic museum officials appalled at the lack of proper provenance accompanying the objects—few carried indigenous names and even less had detailed explanation chronicling their use—and there were many duplicate and redundant pieces. Felix von Luschan, who curated the African and Oceanic collection at the Berlin Royal Ethnographic Museum, even accused Thiel of having denuded entire islands of their artifacts. The head of the Henssler company experienced firsthand that ethnographica made for fickle business and pushed his collection activities into other regions, such as the procurement of German state decorations.

Thiel reached a more satisfying commercial agreement when he left the Pacific in 1910. Emil Timm, Thiel's successor, was to keep collecting exceptional examples of material culture that included much-desired pieces from the Baining and the Sulka in New Britain. Once the artifacts reached Hamburg, the director of the local ethnographic museum received first choice of the objects and took over financial negotiation with other directors or traders, much to Thiel's relief. However, the First World War and the associated loss of German colonies brought this arrangement to an end (Buschmann 2009; forthcoming).



*Friedrich (father of Max) Thiel (seated) and Hemsheim captain Eduard Macco displaying Malagan treasures, 1902, courtesy Dieter Klein.*

The conclusion of anthropology's so-called museum age (c.1870–1920) lowered the demand for indigenous artifacts (Sturtevant, 1969). At the same time, the interwar years also created an awareness of African and Oceanic art among Euro-American artists, who sought to explore new avenues associated with expressionism and surrealism. Ethnographica traders were thus able to continue their business operations until the end of the Second World War (see, for instance, Schindlbeck 2012).

The post-WWII era witnessed a significant transformation in commercial art collecting. David Rockefeller is generally credited with transforming companies into collectors of art when he advised the Chase Manhattan Bank to acquire art. A few years later, another prominent member of this family, Michael Rockefeller, disappeared on a collection trip among the Asmat in Irian Jaya, indicative of the family's early desire to include non-western art in their collections. Other banks and businesses followed in this new direction. It is estimated, for instance, that Deutsche Bank owns no less than 70,000 works of art. Corporate collecting over the past sixty years has also experienced transformations. From early CEO self-indulgence in philanthropy—something the French entitled “danseuse du president” or the president's dancer—art collection in the business world became more focused by consulting art historians and the hiring of dedicated curators. Initially, corporate art collections focused on public relations and entertaining customers. From the 1990s forward, corporations employed art to enrich the workplace and the retention of employees (Bohlen, 2013).

The art collection of the Masco Corporation reflects all of the above listed tendencies. Alex Magoonian, a survivor of the Armenian genocide, founded Masco Corporation shortly before the Great Depression. The Detroit-based company is best known for developing the single-handle faucet, which revolutionized the industry. Alex's son Richard joined the company

in the 1950s, and, under his leadership, it diversified further to include home improvement, heavy equipment, and automotive parts. Richard Magoonian also invested in an extensive art collection. Initially, he collected American art to reflect his sense of patriotism or “a deep-seated feeling for this country, that my family’s had going back for many years” (Salvassy, 1989). His collection comprises over 1,000 paintings estimated at \$250 million (Simmons, 2015).

By the 1980s, Magoonian’s focus expanded to include Native American and Oceanic art. The Masco CEO developed a close relationship with the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), which exhibited many great pieces and provided curatorial assistance for his art collection. In 1994, 76 artifacts of the Oceanic Masco Collection went on an exhibit traveling the United States until 1996. The emphasis of the collection was less on comprehensiveness from a particular area but more on superb, one-of-a-kind objects. Australian veteran dealer Wayne Heathcote primarily assembled the collection, which was curated by DIA Curator of African, New World, and Oceanic Cultures Michael Kan. The exhibition and the associated catalog (Wardwell, 1994) received mixed reviews. While the catalog received awards for design, editing, and manufacturing, Oceanic art historians and anthropologists were less forgiving: Robert Welsch (1995) complained of the quality of photography and also corrected many errors in the text as well as some worrisome statements about Melanesian art. Jerry Feldmann (1995), who reviewed the exhibit at the Honolulu Academy of Art, applauded the rare pieces but found the placement of the objects on pedestals against white walls quite old fashioned. He lauded the Honolulu Academy, however, for organizing a series of symposia and talks that were able to provide greater context for the exhibited pieces. Perhaps most damning was Diane Losche’s review of the catalog that amounted to a “lamentation for the loss of the traditional along with a bid for the value of this particular collection... *Quelle Horreur!* So much for modernity” (Losche, 1997, 270).

The fate of the Masco Oceanic collections was tied to the financial fortunes of the company. The diversification of Masco’s portfolio under Richard Magoonian also revealed some problematic expansion. For instance, heavy investments in furniture manufacture were not conducive to automated manufacture, and, with increasing losses, Masco shareholders clamored to contain Magoonian’s “dancers.” The company-owned gallery Beacon Hill on Madison Avenue in New York closed down in the late 1990s (Vogel, 1998). A number of the valuable pieces of the Oceanic collection were auctioned at Sotheby’s New York in 2001 and 2002—where the present *Iatmul* mask was sold on November 15, 2002. Although the DIA hoped to keep the best artifacts, it was ultimately the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) that acquired close to 50 objects (LACMA, 2009), where a great many of them are now on display in a hall dedicated to the arts of the Pacific.

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Artifacts from the Sepik River displayed for sale at the Hotel Deutscher Hof, ca. 1913/14, courtesy Dieter Klein.

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## 16 Manam Island Mask

Manam Island, Madang Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected by Angel Bottaro and Joel Gauvin, Melbourne

Dale Hardcastle Collection, Singapore

Published in *Michael Hamson Oceanic Art* Paris 2014, no. 17,  
pages 38/9

19th century

25 ½" (65 cm) in height

This pre-contact, stone-carved mask from Manam Island exudes the integrity of an ancient, well-used ritual object. The layers of pigment are a testament to the many occasions the mask has danced in the service of a village. The orange, red, and pink pigments stacked on top of each other create a depth of color both beautiful and culturally significant.









## 17 New Ireland *Tatanua* Mask

New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea  
 Ladislav Segy Gallery, New York, 1950s/60s  
 New York private collection  
 Frank Landau Collection, Frankfurt  
 Late 19th century  
 14 ½" (36.9 cm) in height

The *Tatanua* masks of New Ireland are some of the boldest and most striking in all of Oceania. With tall, crested headdresses atop intricately carved wooden faces with eerily natural-looking shell eyes and large open mouths baring teeth, the masks are visually exciting. This example is superb with its spiked white side, open-work face, and double eyes.





## 18 Astrolabe Bay Mask

Astrolabe Bay, Madang Province, Papua New Guinea

Reportedly from a German or Eastern European museum, inventory number B. 10172 painted in black on white background on mask's reverse.

Wayne Heathcote, London

Faith-Dorian and Martin Wright, New York, acquired from above on 18 July 1980

Carbon dated to the following date ranges: Between 1692 to 1728 AD (26.6% probability) and 1810 to 1920 AD (73.4% probability).

20  $\frac{7}{8}$ " (53 cm) in height

The art from Astrolabe Bay is some of the rarest and least understood in New Guinea. As the area was settled by German missionaries in the 1880s, much of the ritual culture was gone by 1897. As such, there are only 26 Astrolabe Bay masks known. This superb example from the Wright Collection is quintessential for the genre with oversized features—loop ears, nose, and radiating eyes. The patina is thick, dark, and encrusted.















# The Astrolabe Bay Area, 1870–1914. Collectors, Collections, Masks.

Gábor Vargyas

In his paper on “Huon Gulf Collections and Collectors,” R. L. Welsch (2016:16) deplores that “The Huon Gulf is one of the areas on the mainland of Papua New Guinea that was contacted by Europeans earliest, and yet the region and its art are among the least-well-known of the major art-producing regions of New Guinea.” This statement applies just as well to another part of former German New Guinea, the Astrolabe Bay<sup>1</sup>. The Papuan villages and colonial settlements alike are mostly situated on the narrow littoral south from Madang (Friedrich-Wilhelm-

shafen), or on the offshore islands (Bilbil, Yabob), and a few other villages further inland.

Named after the corvette “Astrolabe” of Dumont d’Urville who put the area on the map in 1827, Astrolabe Bay was one of the earliest administrative centers of the German protectorate “Kaiser Wilhelmsland” created in 1884. After the abandonment of Finschhafen as the seat of the colonial administration in 1891, Stephansort—a commercial station and the first headquarters of the German New Guinea Company near Bogadjim village, founded in 1888—became the center of the administration for one year (1891–1892), before it was transferred to Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen (today: Madang), and finally to Herberthshöhe (today: Kokopo) in New Britain (1899).

Colonization went hand in hand with evangelization: the Astrolabe Bay was the territory of the Rhenish (Protestant) Mission Society<sup>2</sup> that founded its first mission station in Bogadjim (1887), followed by a few others (1889 Siar, 1890 Karkar,<sup>3</sup> 1895 Bongu, 1901 Graget). By 1901 there were four coastal centers with four white missionaries and a school: Bogadjim, Siar, Bongu, and Graget; the first hinterland station (1906 Nobonob) and the true inland station at Amele (1916) were founded in the next decades. Notwithstanding the evangelizing efforts, the first baptism occurred only on December 28, 1903, in Bogadjim, and in 1907 “after twenty years of missionary activity the number of Christians totaled twenty-seven souls altogether” (Steffen 1995: 34, quoting Kriele 1927:130).<sup>4</sup> The first conversion in mass occurred in 1914 in Bongu when 127 persons were baptized.

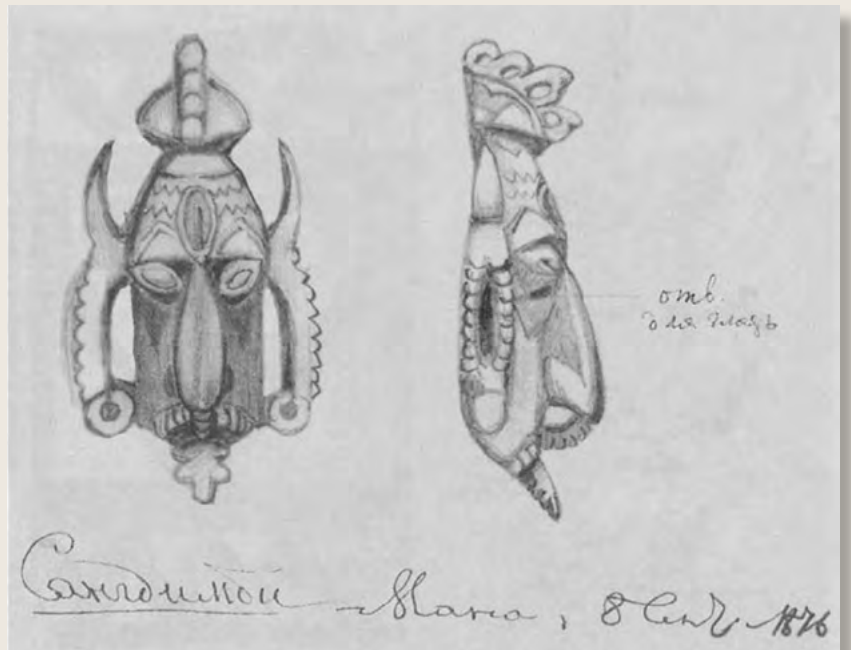


Figure 1

1 In geographical terms an approximately 50-55 km long coastline with its hinterland stretching from Cape Kusserow at Madang (formerly Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen) on the North-West to Cape Rigny on the South-East. Culturally speaking, however, the region extends further north another 45-50 kms up to Cape Croiselles on the mainland, including the “Archipelago of well-content people” (named by Miklouho-Maclay) off Madang, the Hansemann Mountains, Dampier/Karkar and Rich/Bagabag Islands; and south some 200 kms along the Maclay/Rai Coast through Saidor up to Cape König Wilhelm/King William near Sialum – a transitional zone to the Huon Gulf area (Bodrogi, 1959:97).

2 As opposed to the Huon Gulf area that became the hunting ground of the Neuendettelsauer (Lutheran) Mission Society one year earlier (Simbang, near Finschhafen 1886).

3 Karkar had to be interrupted in 1895 because of hostilities and a heavy volcanic eruption. Instead, Thiar/Siar’s subsidiary station and school (“Aussenstation mit Schule”) at Graget island was developed into an independent station. Karkar was re-opened in 1909.

4 Here and in the following all translations from German, Russian, French, and Hungarian are mine.

The first European to set foot in the Astrolabe Bay area was the Russian traveler-explorer, natural scientist-ethnographer, artist and humanist, Nikolai Nikolaevich Miklouho-Maclay (1846–1888).<sup>5</sup> Beside extensive trips all over the Pacific and Indonesia, and shorter visits and stays at other parts of New Guinea (Triton Bay, Southeast Papua, etc.), Maclay spent nearly three years in the southern part of the Astrolabe Bay between 1871 and 1883<sup>6</sup> as an early precursor of stationary anthropological fieldwork. With this early date, he is not only one of the very first researchers in German New Guinea in general, but the only one to have worked in the Astrolabe Bay in the pre-contact period, before colonialization and pacification took place.

Unfortunately, apart from some scientific papers (Miklucho-Maclay 1875, 1876, 1878) he presented his data mostly in the traditional literary forms of his time, diary and travel report, not producing any ethnographic monograph—a fact that earned him later criticism (quoted in Tutorsky *et al.* 2019). A mythical figure nonetheless, an “archetype from the dreamtime of anthropology” (Stocking 1992), he was held in great esteem among his contemporaries. Otto Finsch praised him as follows: “I heard his name called as a friend from Cape Teliata to Karkar everywhere where we met Aborigines, and whenever a Papaya tree (*Carica*), a gourd, a watermelon (*Arbuse*) was shown to us, it was named ‘Maclay’ because he had introduced these fruits here.” His writings “belong to the best of what has ever been written about Papuans. I may allow myself this judgement since I could check his reports on the spot and ascertain their accuracy, the completeness of which being possible at all only through such a long stay and innerly contact with the Aborigines” (Finsch 1893: 39–40 [177–178]).<sup>7</sup>

The German medical doctor Bernhard von Hagen published brief recollections of the Papuan inhabitants about Maclay (1903 in Russian)—a research line that was picked up later by Butinov (1950).<sup>8</sup> From Australian anthropologist Peter Lawrence we know that Maclay’s name—in a transfigured form, as a cargo deity—was alive during his fieldwork in 1949 on the Rai (formerly Maclay) coast: “The Garia never saw him, for he never travelled very far inland, but his name and fame spread and were incorporated in local religions. In the 1960s he was even identified as Jesus Christ (Lawrence 1986:537).”

His small but substantial ethnographic collection of 198 objects (Mikluho-Maklaj 1886; Mikluho-Maklaj 2020/Vol.6/1; Ivanova, 2021) contains 70 pieces from the Astrolabe Bay, among them four “*telum*,” i.e., great male and female wooden statues, two human figures made of clay (called also “*telum*”), and a set of musical instruments connected with the local “Ai” (spirit) cult—but no masks. Among his approximately 740 drawings, however, there are three that depict masks (Mikluho-Maklaj 2020, Vol. 6/1:410—Figure 1) or masked dancers at a “masquerade” (Mikluho-Maklaj 2020, Vol.3:130 and Vol.6/1:414—Figure 2a,b)<sup>9</sup>. The first one, dated September 8, 1876, from Sangdimbi-Mana village, is obviously a rendering of the mask itself shown “in use” by the two other drawings. These two latter are clearly variants of each other, with Figure 2a probably being a draft and Figure 2b a final. Unfortunately, there is practically no information on the drawings.

<sup>5</sup> His name is spelled in slightly different ways in different publications and languages: Miklucho-Maclay, Mikloucho-Maclay, Miklouho-Maclay, Mikluho-Maclay, etc., owing to the different transliterations of the original Russian Cyrillic alphabet. In this respect, in the bibliographical references I kept the original spellings for his German, Dutch, and French papers; for transliterating the Russian entries I have followed the English transliteration presently in use: Mikluho-Maklaj; and in the text I retained the widely used and accepted form “Maclay.”

<sup>6</sup> First trip: September 1871–December 1872, a total of 15 months at Garagassi Point near Gumbu and Gorendu villages; second trip: June 1876–November 1877, a total of 17 months at Bugarlom Point, near Bongu village; third trip: February–March 1883: 3 weeks in the Astrolabe Bay.

<sup>7</sup> Finsch 1893 has two sets of page numbers, I reproduce both. See also Finsch’s necrology of Maclay (Finsch 1888c).

<sup>8</sup> In one of his notes, Hungarian researcher Lajos Biró (see later) mentions a story in connection with Maclay: at the end of his second stay, he offered some cows—bought at a colonial exhibition somewhere—to the inhabitants of Bongu village, that had become wild. Though they caused a lot of problem ruining and trampling down the village gardens, the inhabitants of Bongu did not want to kill them because they considered them “Maclay’s property.” When Finsch arrived in 1884, they implored him to “liberate them from the beasts” (Biró 1932:162–164).

<sup>9</sup> Since all the drawings of Maklaj in the 2020 second, enlarged and corrected version of his Collected Works are reproduced only in black and white, the colour pictures for the illustrations of this paper are taken from the older, 1954 edition.



It is not clear why the “draft” has a localization in its printed legend (Gumbu village)<sup>10</sup> which is not visible on the drawing itself, while the other bears an original legend by Maclay: “*Ai*, Maclay coast” without localization. And, as we have seen, the sketch of the mask itself was made in Sangdimbi-Mana village. Also, the date of the making of both “masquerades” is unknown. *Nonetheless their importance is unquestionable: because of a lack of contemporaneous photographs, they are the only known portrayals of a masked dancer from the Astrolabe Bay area!*

As for the use of the masks, Maclay is very laconic, speaking mostly in general terms. On May 31, 1872, on his visit to Englam Mana village “in a special hut” where amongst others four *telums* were kept, he “was shown, with a great show of mystery and whispered talk, a large wooden mask with holes for the eyes and mouth which was worn during certain feasts; its name here is *ain*, and it was the first one that I had the chance to see” (Tumarkin 1982:231). In a letter to Prince A. A. Meshchersky about “Some results of my second stay at the Maclay Coast of New Guinea in the years of 1876–77,” written at Bugarlom point, October–November, 1877, he casually mentions in his description of Sambul Mana village two masks that he has seen: “Apart from two wooden masks used for the *Ai-Mun* [festival] [...] I became attentive of some bones...” (Mikluho-Maklaj 2020, Vol.2:242).

His most detailed description is to be found in his “Ethnological Notes” (Miklucho-Maclay 1876): “In November and December, when Papuans happen to have less work on the plantations, other types of feasts are organized. One of them, where only men are admitted, is called *Ai-mun*; while another, held within the village, and at which women and children are allowed to participate, is known by the name *Sel-mun*. At an *Ai-mun*, specific masquerades take place. Newly painted *aidogans* (very tall wooden figures carved out of one [piece of] timber and having several [human] figures one above the other) that play an outstanding role in the masquerades, are carried to the place of the feast. The *Ai-mun* lasts some days during which men are especially excited. Day and night, without a stop, masquerades, eating, music, etc. follow each other. Somewhere it is the *Ai-mun* that plays an outstanding role, somewhere it is the *Sel-mun*. Sometimes the *Ai* wanders from one village to another. On such occasions a sham fight is fought between the invading *Ai* and the men of the *Sel-mun*. I was so much interested in these festivities that once I had almost no sleep during 3 days and 2 nights so that I could witness one of them” (1876: 332–333).

What is left out from this published paper is made up for in a draft (in Russian) for a lecture in November–December 1886 in Sankt Petersburg (Mikluho-Maklaj 2020, Vol.3:344–352),<sup>11</sup> in which he lengthily details an *Ai-mun* festival with its dances, musical instruments, banquets, prescriptions, and taboos—but does not say one word on the masks! In short, it seems that Maclay had no deep experience with the masks—either because they were few and used only at rare occasions or because they were among the most tabooed religious objects to which he had but limited access.

The other iconic name insofar as Astrolab Bay is concerned, is the well-known naturalist, ethnographer, explorer, and pioneer of German colonialism, Otto Finsch (1839–1917). He led two great expeditions to the Pacific motivated by an early interest in New Guinea (Finsch 1865). The first South Sea Expedition (1879–1882), organized on his repute as an ornithologist, but dominated by his ethnological interests, was financed by the Humboldt Foundation in Berlin; it covered practically the whole Pacific and took him to Hawai’i; the Marshall, Gilbert, and Caroline islands; Nauru; New Ireland; New Britain; Sydney; New Zealand; the Torres strait islands; Southeast-New Guinea; and Indonesia. It

10 Perhaps because an entry in Maclay’s diary, dated December 5, 1876 (Mikloucho-Maclay 1975:254) describing a *Sel-Mun* (a festive occasion with dance at which huge headdresses called *sanguine-ole*—but not the masks—are used. See Fig.3. in this paper) contains this placename in its heading: “Gumbu” in parenthesis.

11 Not yet translated and published in English.



Figure 2a and 2b (lower right)

(1886–1896) to working with his collections, publishing scientific books, organizing exhibitions, and doing popularizing work.

The second expedition was made up of six exploratory trips along the entire north coast of New Guinea between East Cape and the Dutch border (Humboldt Bay). His first and only longer stay in the Astrolabe Bay took place October 7–29, 1884, on his first New Guinea trip. He arrived in Konstantinhafen, known from the description of Maklai, hoisted the German flag on 17 October, acquired some land, sailed to the north, discovered the bay of what became later Madang harbor (then: Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen) and the islands nearby ("the Archipelago of Well-Content People" and Prinz Heinrich-Hafen). On his return, he sailed till Festungspitze (Fortification Point), all along the Maclay Coast, and from there he followed the southern coast of New Britain up to Mioko (Finsch 1899:19–20).

12 Of these 4,000 objects, 1,665 pieces were retained for the Völkerkunde Museum in Berlin.

resulted in approximately 4,000 ethnological objects,<sup>12</sup> not to speak of the natural-historical and anatomical collections, especially his 200 pieces of plaster-cast "masks," i.e., casts taken from faces of living humans, of which he was especially fond (see Finsch 1884, 1899:14–15).

His second expedition to the Pacific (1884–1885) on board the screw-steamer "Samoa," "was financed and operated by a group of wealthy German traders, entrepreneurs, and businessmen with colonial interests in Northeast New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago" (Weiss – Cazan-Simányi 2012:60; see also Sack 1972). The expedition's main task was to prepare the establishment of the future German Protectorate, to raise the flag, to look for harbors, and to make friendly contacts with the natives (Finsch 1899: 19; see also Weiss – Cazan-Simányi 2012:60, and Sack 1972). He met these requirements creditably and was instrumental in the acquisition of Kaiser-Wilhelmsland and the Bismarck Archipelago in 1884. The so-founded German New Guinea had a capital that was named Finschhafen in his honor, and, on his return, he was awarded with the Prussian medal. Nevertheless, contrary to his legitimate hopes, Finsch was not appointed as an administrator to the new territories, and he also failed to negotiate a privileged position for himself at the New Guinea Company for which he worked for two years as an advisor. Returning to Bremen, he devoted the next ten years





Figure 3

In addition to exploration and colonial politics, he had relatively little time to pursue scientific research. According to his own comment, “As leader of an expedition whose main task was acquisition of land that had nothing to do with ethnological research, I could devote to this latter only my free time [...] trying to use it often in very hard circumstances” (Finsch 1893:40/178). Summing up his results a bit later, concerning collecting he adds: “As compared to my geographical results, the ethnological ones may perhaps be even more important, and they are of practical use for the aims of the Company. Convinced in the veracity of the above, I not only kept special notebooks on the Aborigines but labored—in hard circumstances and with self-devotion—on bringing together a rich and diverse ethnological collection, a task for which I was not bound by contract” (Finsch 1899:28–29). “As a visible result of my efforts, I brought back a very rich collection, the main part of which, 2,128 pieces—as from all my collections—went to the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin through purchase from the New Guinea Company” (Finsch 1893:40/178)—with doublets or less important pieces getting into “provincial” museums.

On both Pacific expeditions, he had the right to collect or keep redundant pieces for his own purposes. He assembled thus a huge private collection that ended up later—divided and sold in parts—in what is today the Weltmuseum, Wien; the National

Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography “Luigi Pigorini”; The Kunstkamera Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences; the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; and the American Museum of Natural History, New York (Finsch 1899:29; see also Howes 2018:4). As far as I know, there has never been an attempt to reunite—virtually, in an exhibition, or a publication—these collections, and apart from *Ethnologische Erfahrungen* (1893) that presents the collection in Vienna, and a “ready for print” manuscript catalogue written between 1892–1897 for the collection kept at the Natural History Museum in New York,<sup>13</sup> there are no publications on Finsch’s museum material.

His other collections (in Berlin and elsewhere) are known only from old exhibition catalogues (Finsch 1886a, 1886b, 1887, 1892–1897), inaccessible for the time being. And since after his second expedition Finsch returned to Bremen and became only at the end of his career—after a detour at the Museum of Natural History, Leiden, as an ornithologist (1897–1904)—the curator of ethnology at the Municipal Museum in Braunschweig, a post he held until his death (1904–1917), it is not impossible that these museums also contain some smaller collections or objects from him.<sup>14</sup>

To come back to collecting, it “is far not as easy as it seems, especially not amongst Primitives (Naturvölkern) who do not work for trade and have no bazaars. The expectations brought here from museums are satisfied only partially [...] An even greater hardship than collecting itself is constituted by the inquiry after the use of the objects at many occasions. The great linguistic diversity especially

<sup>13</sup> See his note in 1899:29 and 73.

<sup>14</sup> In 2012 an exhibition at the “Weltmuseum” in Vienna was devoted to Finsch, “the passionate collector” and scientist. See Weiss and Cazan-Simányi 2012.



in Melanesia causes the foremost problem in this respect, whereby misunderstandings are so easy to commit" (Finsch 1893:86, quoted by Weiss – Cazan-Simányi 2012:16). This collecting, as pointed out by Welsch (2005:12), was typically "shipboard collecting." "While Finsch and later explorers covered extensive distances and made significant collections of art and objects of ethnological interest, they typically made their collections aboard their ships. Villagers would swim or paddle their small canoes from their villages to the ships and barter with virtually everyone on board." Let us face it, this is the easiest way of collecting and transporting the objects home. Why then Finsch complains repeatedly about "hard circumstances" and boasts of "self-devotion," is not exactly clear.

Unfortunately, we know next to nothing on the circumstances of the acquisition of his pieces, but, in the best cases, the exact provenance of the object is known. His Astrolabe Bay objects are described in Finsch 1893:37/125–121/259. They mostly come from the area "around Konstantinhafen (Bongu village) and, a bit further to west, Bogadschi village where the New Guinea Company has founded a few years ago the test-station Stephansort" (1893: 181/43). Besides, Bilibili, "a small but densely populated and rich island in the northern part of the Astrolabe Bay" and Gräger (Graget/Kranket) island are mentioned as where pieces in his collection may originate. Regrettably, in their description Finsch often lumps together the whole north coast from Huon Gulf to the Sepik mouth, accepting the generally held opinion of his time (Haddon 1894; Preuss 1897–98).

For the description of the masks, e.g., he repeats Maclay's note on the *Ai* festivals while presenting two "beak-style" masks from the Dallmannhafen (Wewak) area and a small stone *telum* from Bongu (Plate XXIII. page 146/360)—giving the false impression of speaking about one and the same thing, the Astrolabe Bay-style province.

I left to the end an intriguing question concerning Finsch's personal acquaintance with Mikluho-Maclay. Writing about the *Ai*-mun festivals and the masquerades/masks connected with them (reproduced faithfully after Maclay's description), he mentions *en passant* "Maclay showed me among his sketches the phantastic tower-like headdresses made of feathers, colored leaves and similar things that men wear on their head" (1893:255/117). Figure 3. The question arises immediately: where and when did they meet? Nothing is known about it. Surely, it could not be in New Guinea. Maclay stayed three times in the Astrolabe Bay, in 1871–1872, 1876–1877, and 1883. Finsch, however, visited the region first in October 1884. As both scientists travelled a lot, not only in Europe but all over the world, they must have met each other somewhere else. The most likely place is Australia: between June 1883 and February 1886, Maclay lived in Sydney<sup>15</sup> and Finsch set out for his second Pacific expedition from the same place, having spent three months in Sydney from 15 June to 10 September 1884. They may have used this opportunity to meet, if, for nothing else, courtesy, sharing information or consultation and advice.

Another intriguing question is why Finsch speaks only about the drawing of the tower-like headdresses when describing the masked processions? Did he not know drawings Figs. 1 and 2ab reproduced above? Why is he silent about them? Did he not see them? Unfortunately, the casual passage does not allow us more than formulating the question.

Let us close this excursus on Finsch's activity with a lesson that may sound astounding: in his published oeuvre of several thousand pages just as in his museological material totaling again several thousand pieces<sup>16</sup>, *there is not one picture of a mask from the Astrolabe Bay or one mention of a piece collected or seen by him*. His eventual discussion of the masks is admittedly a paraphrase of the

15 For Maklai's detailed CV with exact dates, see Mikluho-Maklaj 2020, Vol.1:23–28. (In Russian).

16 Approximately 4,000 pieces from his first Pacific expedition plus 2,128 objects in Berlin from the second expedition plus his private collections sold abroad not to speak of his pieces in "provincial" German museums. All this adds up to likely 7-8000 pieces.

description of Maclay with whom he was acquainted. In sum: the single month he spent in Astrolabe Bay was not enough for him to do deep collecting, and masks do not figure in his collection.<sup>17</sup> All this points again to the fact that masks were rare and hardly accessible objects for collectors even in the early pre-contact period. In any event, Finsch's report and testimony are of inestimable value: after Maclay, he is the first to furnish data on the material and spiritual culture of the Astrolabe Bay area.

Our next protagonists are two Hungarians, Samuel Fenichel (1868–1893) and Lajos Biró (1856–1931), both natural historians by training turned into ethnographers as it was common at the beginnings of ethnography/anthropology.<sup>18</sup> Both stayed and worked in the same decade, the 1890s in the Astrolabe Bay. Fenichel was the first (December 22, 1891–March 6, 1893) and when he died of blackwater fever in Stephansort after 15 months of active collecting, Biró took up the relay baton and stayed for six years in German New Guinea (January 1, 1896–December 27, 1901)—a significant part of which was spent in the Astrolabe Bay.

The context of their stay and collecting was practically the same. In 1896, Hungary celebrated the 1000-year anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian Kingdom, a member state of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This period between 1867<sup>19</sup> and 1918 was the Golden Age in Hungarian history, the palmy days of peace in every aspect, political, economic, and cultural alike. The dynamic atmosphere coupled with national pride brought with it a heightened emphasis on scientific inquiry, amongst others ethnography/anthropology and social evolution. In contrast to the great colonial powers like England, France, or Germany, Hungary has never had colonies and thus did not have the opportunity to do research on “exotic” places and cultures in her own territories/colonies. Her only prospect in this regard stemmed from her association with the German Empire through the Austrian side of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a relationship that concluded with the dissolution of the Monarchy at the close of World War I. But here, we are still in the heydays of the Dual Monarchy, and the newly acquired German colony, New Guinea, was a *par excellence* place for discovering a hitherto unknown exotic flora and fauna or doing evolutionist research among “living stone-age” people—thus working for the benefit of humankind.<sup>20</sup>

Since the life and activity of both Fenichel and Biró has been summed up in English (Vargyas 2008; see also Gyarmati 2008) and has been discussed from several aspects (Bodrogi 1953, 1959, 1978–1980, 1979, 1982, 1990; Vargyas 1986, 1987, 1991, 1998, 2016), I will touch on the essential. Fenichel, an amateur archaeologist and ornithologist, coming from a multi-lingual Transylvanian milieu and employed as a taxidermist-curator at the Department of Archaeology, National Museum of Bucharest, arrived in German New Guinea as a member of an ornithological expedition organized and financed by German naturalist, ethnologist, traveler, photographer, and undertaker, Alfred Grubauer (1869–1960).<sup>21</sup> Their expedition shipwrecked in the first days of their arrival in New Guinea, and Fenichel found himself left behind without financial support and backing. Thus, he turned to the Hungarian National Museum and offered his services.

17 This statement may turn out later to be wrong as his collections from the Astrolabe Bay are not yet processed and published.

18 Maclay and Finsch were also natural historians, Maclay—amongst others—a marine biologist, and Finsch an ornithologist.

19 1867: year of the “Compromise” and creation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy that ceased to exist after World War I.

20 See e.g., the letter of Lajos Biró, written in Madang, November 18, 1899 (Biró 1923:157): “Nothing could make me happier than if some day in the future one could report that though Finschhafen had been almost for a decade the center of gravity of German colonization, a point of departure of any scientific expedition, and yet we Hungarians discovered it for science!”

21 Grubauer undertook later several expeditions to insular Southeast Asia hunting for ethnographic items (“curios”) to sell them to museums in Europe. In 1911, he was active in British North Borneo. See Kasatkina, Alexandra (2018–2019): A “Missing Link?” A set of genital piercing instruments from British North Borneo in the collections of Albert Grubauer in St. Petersburg and Munich. *Journal Fünf Kontinente* Vol.3: 195–218. See also his *Unter Kopffägern in Central-Celebes. Ethnologische Streifzüge in Südost- und Central-Celebes*. Leipzig: R. Voigtländers Verlag, 1913.

According to an agreement concluded with museum leadership, from then on, Fenichel would collect artefacts for the Museum,<sup>22</sup> and the museum would transfer payment to New Guinea. Due to the circumstances, he settled down in Bongu village and, stepping into Maclay's shoes, became an unwitting pioneer of stationary fieldwork. It is clear from his correspondence that sharing the life of the inhabitants of Bongu enabled him to learn the local language within few months; he was thus able to continue his work. Eventually, his interests came to include ethnography as well as natural history. Before his death in Stephansort on March 6, 1893, Fenichel assembled an outstanding collection of ethnographic objects (around 2,600 pieces, and 30 photographs), soon to be united with the Lajos Biró Collection to form the backbone of the Museum of Ethnography's Pacific Collections and, within it, the internationally famous Astrolabe Bay Collection.

His bequest reached Hungary via Berlin through J. S. Kubary,<sup>23</sup> then stationmaster in Konstantin-hafen (now Erimba, south of Madang), who handled it *ex officio*. Fenichel's collection is unparalleled both for its size and in that it represents the earliest phase of the contact period when local cultures had had only limited and recent contact with the outside world, and when the most impressive religious art objects could still be obtained. Unfortunately, his early death prevented him from completing his lifework. The artefacts and the masks he collected entered the museum devoid of documentation (similarly to nearly all the great collections of the period), and his life remains a tragic loss.

Fenichel's death came as a shock to scientific circles in Hungary, and the Zoology Department of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences expressed the need that his work be continued. It was Lajos Biró, a natural historian of country-wide fame, who took up the thread. The two men conducted their work on similar terms. Just as had Fenichel, Biró worked in association with the National Museum in Budapest. He sent artefacts to the Department of Ethnography which culled out what it needed, estimated the value of the items concerned, and transferred payment to New Guinea. The leftover pieces remained as the property of Biró who had free disposal of them—an arrangement similar to that of Finsch.

Biró's collections were partly published in bilingual catalogues (Hungarian and German) while he was still in the field in New Guinea (Biró 1899, 1901). The museum staff catalogued the artefacts according to type, wrote the introductory and chapter notes together with the bibliographic references, while Biró's personal notes appeared in parentheses. These publications earned him worldwide fame even if he was unhappy with the abovementioned solution. Knowing from his own experience how much the published data was unreliable, he warned his colleagues about the uncritical use of the scientific literature of his time. This may be the reason why the second part of his Astrolabe Bay collection, just like the one from the Huon Gulf, has never been published. And, to the great detriment of ethnology and Pacific studies, Biró has never published his oft-promised *magnum opus* on the cultures of Astrolabe Bay and the other places he had visited. The elaboration of his material remained a lifetime occupation for the next generations.

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22 At that time, the National Museum housed ethnographic collections, too, in its Department of Ethnography. The Museum of Ethnography became formally independent only in 1947.

23 J. S. Kubary (1846–1896) is known for his classic works on the Caroline Islands, Micronesia.



Biró's fame has cast a shadow over Fenichel whose name is often unjustly omitted or neglected. This is not only because he spent much longer in New Guinea than his predecessor, and collected twice as many objects, or because he survived and had time to work on his fame. It ensues mostly from his great achievement and true novelty: Biró not only collected but also *documented* the collected objects in a most meticulous way. In this respect he surpasses by far all his contemporaries<sup>24</sup> and later collectors. For each object, he recorded how, when, and where it was produced, how it was used, and what local names applied, including the names of any motifs involved. It was Biró who first understood that the place of acquisition is not necessarily the place of manufacture, and it was Biró who first called attention to the widespread use of barter in the region.

Biró also discovered the principle by which some areas served as places of manufacture and others as places of use. He gave ethnographic objects the same attention an entomologist gives his moths and insects, striving to collect entire series of artefacts to document the variety of decorative motifs and the differences introduced by individual artisans. Even so, his collection of around 5,500 pieces falls short of Fenichel's in several respects, especially in art pieces associated with religious practices (masks, *telums*, dance rattles, ritual carvings, etc.), probably as a consequence of a rapid culture change in the coastal areas.

For reasons not yet clear, culture change in the Astrolabe Bay region has been extremely early and swift, and many traditional objects or object types disappeared entirely in a few years' time. Whether this could be the result of evangelization is a question. We had seen the lack of success of this latter in the introductory part: the first baptism occurred only December 28, 1903, in Bogadjim (two years *after* Biró's departure in 1901 and ten years after Fenichel's death) and even in 1907 "after twenty years of missionary activity the number of Christians totaled twenty-seven souls altogether" (Steffen 1995: 34). This could suggest that the influence of Christianity is negligible as far as our period is concerned. The relatively dense chain of mission stations on a tight coastal area not exceeding 50 kms in length,<sup>25</sup> however, suggests an implicit impact on the surrounding population well before conversion took place. If not, Christian evangelizers nonetheless were agents of a new way of life and values and perhaps eventual "curio-hunters?" I repeat the year of the foundation of the mission stations: 1887 Bogadjim; 1889 Siar; 1890 Karkar (with an interruption between 1895–1909); 1895 Bongu; 1901 Graget. One wonders if the existence of these early mission stations and the disappearance of religious artworks in the same period cannot be connected.

In this respect a telling example, first mentioned and analyzed by Bodrogi (1953:91–92), is that seven of the eight *telum* figures or ancestral statues currently found in the New Guinea collection were contributed by Fenichel. Biró, who conducted his own and most thorough collecting work not more than *three years after* Fenichel, managed to acquire only *one* complete statue and one fragment. What is more, the Museum owns sixteen (!) masks<sup>26</sup> from the Astrolabe Bay from Fenichel's collection, *a number probably surpassing all the other existing ones taken together from all over the world*. In sharp contrast with it, Biró's collection does not contain *either* a mask *or* a note on this type of object, notwithstanding the fact that Biró lived for a longer time in the Astrolabe Bay than Fenichel and that he exceeded him in every respect as a collector. All this points unequivocally to the fact that by 1895–1896, the date of Biró's relatively early arrival to the Astrolabe Bay, there were no showy "art pieces" available for collectors—whether it was due to the impact of evangelization or something else.

24 See Finsch's complaints about the difficulties of getting information on the objects, above, p.7.

25 From south to north in the Astrolabe Bay: Bongu, Bogadjim, Siar, and Graged.

26 In the meantime, three of them have been exchanged. See later.

Certainly, German presence and colonialization must have played a key role in it. The fact that the headquarters of the colony were for one year in Stephansort near Bogadjim (1891–1892), then for another seven years in Madang (1892–1899), surely meant a quick intrusion, a close everyday contact, and a heavy European influence in the area. The rapid economic development, the orderly communication with the outside world (regular passenger ships and mailboats to Singapore, Batavia, and Sydney), the hustle and bustle in the new industrial undertakings and plantations of the New Guinea Company, the scientific expeditions led into the hinterland (Schrader 1886, Zöller 1888, Lauterbach 1890, Ehlers 1895, Tappenbeck 1896, etc.) opened up the region with tremendous speed.<sup>27</sup> To read Biró's popularizing writings and look at his photos, one has the impression that the German administrators in New Guinea did not lack for anything—be it home comfort, social club, ice-cold beer, or nice-looking handmaids.<sup>28</sup> All this coupled with the presence of warships in the harbors of Konstantinshafen and Madang, the police forces, the acquaintance of the local population with firearms, and especially the most unfortunate first retaliating expeditions must have triggered a pronounced and quick culture change.<sup>29</sup>

A third possible reason for the disappearance of ethnographica, especially the spectacular art pieces must have been "curio-hunting." There is no place to dwell lengthily here on the question. Be it enough that from the establishment of German rule onwards (1884), it was strictly regulated and controlled but still omnipresent. "From 1884 to 1899, the New Guinea Company administered the German colony solely for its own financial gain [...] Company policies allowed staff to collect ethnological material wherever they went as a sideline and supplementary source of company revenues. In principle these items were to be turned over to company administrators, who then sold them to curio dealers in Germany" (Welsch 2005:14). Collecting was taxed. For example, Biró's yearly incomes were estimated to 4,000 German marks: "I am fortunate that the Tax Assessment Committee considered me a collector for the Museum, therefore I was not charged [as much] as if I would have collected for commercial reasons. [...] Paradise-bird hunting is taxed with a supertax: it coasts yearly 1,000 marks" (Biró 1923: 34).

Curios were held in great esteem, so much that "snatching away ethnologica is a fashionable entertainment hereabouts and if ever something human would happen to me, [my collection] will be lost forever" (Biró 1932: 137). Several of Biró's photos show his verandah or the interior of his house: it is jam-packed with ethnographic objects arranged as in a museum. Furthermore, an established custom in social communication in German New Guinea was reciprocating a service, a loan, or some help "through a gift of stuffed bird, butterfly or ethnologica" (Biró 1932:71). In sum, collecting in the early contact period was one of the most popular pastimes. The situation reminds one of the ironic comment of A. B. Lewis from 1912 from Papua: "The white population is estimated at about 1,000, and nearly every man is, or has been, on the lookout for "curios"" (Welsch 2005:13).

All in all, notwithstanding Biró's self-confident assertion "the first day of 1896 when I landed in New Guinea, I arrived in a virgin region free of European influence. Wherever I went, arriving at the third-fourth village, lots of Aborigines came to see me because I was the first European they had met" (Biró 1932:154), we cannot be overly wrong if by the years of 1895–1896 we suppose tentatively a first wave of culture change, i.e., the intrusion of European goods and as a consequence, the exhaustion of the traditional material culture. The first decade of German rule seems to have resulted in "emptying" the region of its traditional material culture, mostly religious art objects.

27 By 1901, the New Guinea Company established a narrow-gauge railway towed by oxen in Stephansort.

28 For the everyday life of the colonial administration in the Astrolabe Bay, see Vargyas 1986:12–40.

29 For an eyewitness description of Biró on a retaliation on French Islands, February 18, 1901 by the warship "Cormoran" see Vargyas 1986:54–77 and Plates 64–66.

Let us stop here for a moment to have a closer look at the masks from Fenichel's collection. We had seen that the sixteen pieces collected by him represent a uniquely rich collection even in a worldwide comparison: their number, I repeat, surpasses in all probability all the other existing ones taken together from all over the world. No other collection, no other museum in the world owns more than one or two pieces altogether, and even if the exact number of existing Astrolabe Bay masks has not yet been established, it is highly unlikely that the sum total will ever reach over thirty. Owing to the early death of Fenichel, the masks are unfortunately not accompanied by notes. All we know about them, and their use, has been summarized by Tibor Bodrogi in two papers (1953, 1959). The first (1953) is an exceptionally detailed summary of all the literary sources relating to the initiation rituals and circumcision in the Astrolabe Bay area and, together with it, a short general summary of the masks (p.133) which is followed by a list and picture of *all* the Fenichel masks in the collections of the Ethnographic Museum (pp.151–168) plus a selection of other artifacts used during the same initiations rituals, from the collections of Fenichel and Biró and again in the Museum of Ethnography (pp. 168–184).

As for the formal traits of the masks, Bodrogi's description is more than succinct: "The masks are anthropomorphic, hatchet-faced, and their craftsmanship is rather rough and rude. On their backs, which are done with somewhat less care, the traces of carving are clearly seen. Every mask has features entirely of its own. On each of them there are spy-holes<sup>30</sup> under the eyes that are usually carved *bas relief*" (Bodrogi 1953:133).

A second and somewhat more detailed description is given by him in his second publication: "The few masks from the Astrolabe Bay which are in European collections belong undoubtedly to the most splendid works of New Guinea art [...]. Though rather crude and clumsy, they represent the figures they want to personify, presumably the ancestors, with a convincing force. There are not two identical masks among those we know and yet, the elements of their design make it evident that all of them belong to the same style province: this is quite clear from those characteristics which they have in common with the sculptures. The wooden masks are either elongated rectangles or ovals. The plastically carved circular or oval eyes are surmounted by the protruding supraorbital ridges. Eyebrows are indicated by curved lines. On the upper part of the masks, we frequently encounter the flattened hemisphere indicative of the shaggy headdress. The ears are executed with the open-work technique—the same as on statues—and adorned with carved earrings. Large, sharply curved noses constitute a characteristic feature. Unlike large statues, masks are provided with oral apertures, and the teeth in the mouth are indicated by notches. We have found the hanging martial mouth-projection, so characteristic of larger statues, only on two of the masks known to us" (Bodrogi 1959:59).

#### ASTROLABE BAY MASKS IN MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY, BUDAPEST

1-No 8918, 45 cm, purplish brown color.

2-No 8919, 43 cm, purplish brown color.

3-No 8920. Black, on the face in place traces of red paint, 45 cm. Published by Bodrogi 1959: Plate number 31 [with a mistaken register number]. Exchanged in 1971. Today in the JOLIKA collection of John and Marcia Friede, housed at the "de Young Museum", Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. See *New Guinea Art* 2005: Plates 366a, b.

4-No.8921, 43 cm, purple color.

30 "Spy holes" are real holes for the dancers to see since the "eyes" of the masks are carved in relief, without a hole. See the drawing of Maclay (Fig.1.) where an abbreviated explanation in Russian is added in front of this hole: "otverstye dlja glaza" = "hole for the eyes."





*Astrolabe Bay Masks in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest.*

- 5-No 8922, 69 cm, dark brown and glossy color. Exchanged in 1962 with the "Museum der Kulturen" (then: Museum für Völkerkunde) in Basel.
- 6-No 8923. The headdress represents three wild boar tusks bent into a circle, 57 cm, dark brown color.
- 7-No 8924, 49 cm, dark brown color.
- 8-No 8925, 42 cm, greyish brown with purple shades color.
- 9-No 8926, 60 cm, blackish color.
- 10-No 9827, 48 cm, purple brown color. Exchanged in 1962 with the "Museum der Kulturen" (then: Museum für Völkerkunde) in Basel.
- 11-No 8928, 60 cm, blackish brown color.
- 12-No 8929 A very old piece, cracked in places, 39 cm, color dark brown, in places with purple and black paint.
- 13-No 8930, 39 cm, purplish brown in color.
- 14-No 8931. Half of the face is painted black, the other half red, around the labial parts the color is white, 40 cm
- 15-No 8932. 66 cm, purplish in color, glossy surface.
- 16-No 8933. Blackish, the labial parts are framed white, on the face stripes of white, 53 cm.

Continuing with the history of collecting in the Astrolabe Bay, the last major figure in the pre-World War I period is Albert Buell Lewis (1867–1940), "the first American anthropologist to conduct systematic research" in Melanesia and New Guinea (Welsch 1999:4). The lifework of Lewis and the history of the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition in 1909-1913<sup>31</sup> has been treated in detail in a remarkable two-volume book by R. Welsch (1998). As a former PhD student of Boas and newly appointed assistant curator in 1909, Lewis was sent by the Field Museum in Chicago—then an emerging new museum competing for fame with older, more established institutions in the USA—to collect ethnological artifacts. The trip that lasted for four years took him all over Melanesia, all the colonial territories of Melanesia: Fiji, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, German New Guinea, Papua, and Dutch New Guinea. At the end of his trip, he "assembled the largest single collection of Melanesian material culture ever made in the field. Containing more than fourteen thousand objects and nearly two thousand photographs, this collection is still the premier American collection from Melanesia. It remains one of the most important research and reference collections of Melanesian material culture in the world" (Welsch 1998:3).

Lewis arrived in the Astrolabe Bay April 5, 1910 and left it June 4 for the North Coast. By then, the region has undergone a rapid culture change. He did not linger for too long. He visited Madang town a few times and made a few cursory comments on what he saw. Thus, an entry in his diary dated April 12, 1910, from a trip to Panim village, four hours of walk inland from Madang, runs as follows: "Bought a few things. Not much here. Pots from Bilibili. Also a few from the interior, thin coiled ware. Got 4 of these. Bowls (wood) from Rai coast; a few old shields, and spears, ornaments not many (compared to islands), and a tendency to mix in beads. Saw one dance mask or headdress, shaped like a house, with a long pole on top, covered with feathers and cloth. The house was of painted bark, also paper and cloth, so that it was of no worth. Had been made for the Christmas dances" (Welsch 1998:224). Another entry describes the situation at Graget island off Madang where he made a visit guided by the missionary of the Rhenish Mission Society, Heinrich Helmich. Here, in the men's house,

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<sup>31</sup> Named so in honor of the patron and financial backer of the expedition, Joseph N. Field.

he saw “bows (from inland), arrows (from inland and Rai—also fish arrows homemade), spears (native and from inland), 21 shield, 1 broken figure (post?) with snake and frog, and feet of human image broken off. Canoe with one sideboard very rudely ornamented. End piece bent [...] and ornamented” (Welsch 1998: 236).

The mention of the remains of a broken human figure (probably a *telum*) in the men’s house on Graget island epitomizes the general situation in the Astrolabe Bay: the “classical” places, Bogadjim, Bongu, Bilbil, Siar, Graget, etc., to the south from Madang had been well picked-over by 1910 by one visitor after another. These communities “were among the most profoundly influenced by contact with Germans. These villages had been evangelized by the Lutherans; large tracts of their lands had been alienated by the company; and they were being administered harshly by German *kiaps* [...] To prevent all the village land from being transformed into New Guinea Compagnie plantations, the administration had even been forced to establish reserves or reservations around Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen” (Welsch 1998:228).

Thus, having bought some few things of the small handicraft sort, he moved further along the coast to the north. His plan was to link places he had known from his earlier visits (Huon Gulf, Aitape region, etc.), setting off from Madang both in western and eastern directions so that he would have a complete picture of the cultural variations of a huge area—a question that was the focus of his interest as a researcher. Most of the 2,854 objects originating from the “North Coast” are not from the Astrolabe Bay region; they came from the coastline and its immediate hinterland north of Madang up to the Ramu and the Sepik mouth. The objects are poorly attributed, the total number that have an exact place of origin from Astrolabe Bay proper hardly reach 150, Rai coast included. To sum up: “Lewis may have collected a few ornaments of no significance from Astrolabe Bay, but no carvings of any significance”<sup>32</sup>—not to speak of masks which he does not mention at all. Rai coast is for that matter a question: we know that Lewis planned to visit it, but it is not clear if he ever made it. There is no mention of it in the surviving documents.<sup>33</sup> As for photographs, of the surviving 1,561 images hardly two dozen were shot in the Astrolabe Bay.

We cannot but lament this situation because Lewis was an excellent fieldworker and collector. “He kept a daily journal or expedition diary that outlined his activities and what he observed in the villages. In this field diary Lewis kept notes about how different objects were made or used, jotted down other information about material culture, and entered remarks and observations that provoked his interest. As he moved about the region he kept a systematic log of his collection, a list of numbered specimens with notes about each piece (usually indicating where a piece was collected and made), local names, and other notes as appropriate. These specimen lists, together with his field diary and other notes, provided information about specific pieces and were the notes he used to catalog the collection on his return. By today’s standards the documentation of his collection is limited to be sure, but his documentation is general much better than that of other researchers and collectors of his day” (Welsch 1998:9).

With Lewis, we arrive to the end of our panorama of the great collectors and collections from Astrolabe Bay. Certainly, many people—German and other administrators, officials, servicemen, missionaries, medical doctors, traders, undertakers, explorers, and scientists—had lived and worked for shorter or longer periods in the region. Most of them probably did some collecting and acquired eventually important items, but their collections, if they ever existed as such, are unknown for the

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32 Personal communication of Robert Welsch to Gábor Vargyas July 22, 2021, mediated by Michael Hamson.

33 See Note 6. page 585. of Book 4. in Vol.1.



time. A detailed inventory of existing Astrolabe Bay collections is still wanting. Smaller, unknown collections emerge from time to time (Melk-Koch 2007). A few extraordinary pieces had been published in the past. To close this paper, I wish to present a few masks known from little-known old publications without pretension to fullness.

As far as I know, the only Astrolabe Bay mask pictured in an early, end of nineteenth-century publication is due to medical doctor Bernhard von Hagen, founding director of the Museum of Ethnology in Frankfurt (1904), after his return from the Astrolabe Bay where he had served as doctor of the New Guinea Company in Stephansort from 1893 to 1895. Hagen and Biró knew each other, and, according to this latter's opinion, his book is one of the few reliable publications on the Astrolabe Bay region. "Unter den Papuas in Deutsch-Neu-Guinea," published in 1899, contains a photo (Plate 27) which shows "Implements and Arms from German New Guinea" arranged on a wall "artistically," and among them a beautiful wooden mask, with the following legend on its backside: "Wooden Asa-mask from Bogadjim village."

Figure 4 This photo is doubly important: it is the only one that shows a mask *in situ*, in the Astrolabe Bay, in the possession of its owner, Dr. Hagen. Second, it authenticates the provenance from Bogadjim village—a rare fact as most of the early pieces are labelled in contemporary museum collections "German New Guinea" or, in the best of the cases, "Astrolabe Bay." Moreover, this mask belongs today to the Pacific collections of the Linden Museum, Stuttgart



Figure 4

(No.27,128; Bogadjim). When and how this mask got to the Linden museum's collections is not known; it is not known either if Hagen had had a collection apart from this one mask.

Another relatively early publication is the 1929 Volume (No. 2–3.) of the journal "Cahiers d'Art."<sup>34</sup> It contains a curious paper by an anonymous author, a certain "Dr. O." on "primitive art and psycho-analysis according to Eckard von Sydow." Among the 45 illustrations that have hardly any legends and that have nothing to do with the text having been chosen probably for the sake of "nice" illustrations, nos. 39, 40, and 41 are pictures of unique masks from the Astrolabe Bay. Two of them, nos. 39 and 40, are labelled belonging to the "Museum in Barmen." This must be the Archive und Museum of the "United Evangelical Mission"<sup>35</sup> in Wuppertal today. It is not known if the pieces still exist, and I do not know of any publication from the Museum that would contain a newer picture of them. Figure 5

The story of the third piece Fig. 41. is even more interesting: it belonged to the "Flechtheim collection." Alfred Flechtheim (1878–1937) was a German art dealer of Jewish origin, specialized mostly in modern French and German art, expelled by the Nazis in 1933. His collection, part of the "degenerate art," was confiscated and sold. Part of it reached the USA later. What this piece may have become is not known. If there is a hope for the masks in Barmen to have survived, the Flechtheim piece is probably lost forever.

In sum, we have seen the main protagonists on the Astrolabe Bay scene before the First World War: Maclay, the Russian; Finsch, the German; Fenichel and Biró, the Hungarians; and Lewis, the American. Among them, only the two Hungarians have succeeded in assembling a collection unique both from quantitative and qualitative points of views. Maclay's collection from the Astrolabe Bay is

34 "Cahiers d'Art" is/was a French artistic and literary journal founded in 1926 by art critic Christian Zervos that existed until 1960. Since 2012 it is newly published. It was also a publishing house that edited monographs on French artists of the first half of the 20st century. Third, it was a modern art gallery, too.

35 The VEM ("Vereinigte Evangelische Mission" [United Evangelical Mission]) is a fusion since 1971 of the Rhenish Mission Society founded in 1818 and the Bethel Mission founded in 1886. In 1979 the Zaire mission also joined them. The VEM has an Archive and Museum, named "Museum auf der Hardt" in Wuppertal-Barmen. Barmen was an independent city until 1929 when it was united to Wuppertal.

small (70 pieces altogether) but fundamental. Finsch's collections (6,000–8,000 objects?) do not seem to have especially important Astrolabe Bay pieces. Fenichel's smaller but earlier collection (around 2,600 objects) is unsurpassable insofar it contains most of the splendid religious art works, masks (as ancestral figures [*telums*], dance rattles, stone figures, etc.) that we know at present. As for the first ones, probably more than half of the known existing masks in the world from the Astrolabe Bay were collected by him. Biró's greater collection (5,500 pieces) does not have any masks and contains few ancestral figures and no dance rattles. Finally, Lewis' huge collection (of 14,000 objects) is insignificant insofar as Astrolabe Bay is concerned. It follows that the only important collection in the world (over 8,000 pieces!) representing the material culture of the Astrolabe Bay in its totality, not to speak of the masterpieces of the region's art and among them, the masks, collected in the early contact period (1891–1893 for Fenichel and 1896–1901 for Biró), is to be found in Hungary, in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. As far as masks are concerned I cannot but repeat what I had said twenty-two years ago: "I would like to draw attention to the fact how small is the number of existing masks and *telums*. In his 1959 paper Bodrogi catalogued forty-six *telums* and twenty-six masks altogether (in both cases museum objects, field photos and drawings included!). Even if we assume unrealistically that future research will double their number, we shall still count them in tens and not in hundreds or thousands—not to speak about the abundance of Sepik or New Ireland art pieces! This means that Astrolabe Bay objects may count amongst the rarest pieces of Papua New Guinea art and as such, they are of inestimable value. Time has come to take detailed inventories of them and to present them in a publication for the scientific world and the descendants of their makers" (Vargyas 1999:252).



Figure 5

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## 19 Papuan Gulf Spirit Board, *Kwoi*

Purari Delta region, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea  
 Gaston de Havenon Collection, New York  
 Pre-contact, stone-carved, 19th century  
 47¾" (121.2 cm) in height

There is a weight, scale, and presence to this spirit board that is undeniably ancient. The design is essentially symmetrical but swerves and undulates as is typical in pre-contact, stone-carved objects. Age, clarity, expression, bold graphics, and a distinguished provenance set this one at the very top of the category.









## Gaston de Havenon

1904–1993

By Michael Hamson

Gaston de Havenon was both a dealer and collector that, while specializing in African art, also collected some masterpieces of Oceanic art—such as the world-record-setting Solomon Islands *nguzu nguzu* canoe prow that sold at Sotheby's Paris on 15 June 2011 for 1,520,750 Euros.

Born in Tunis, de Havenon emigrated to the United States at the age of 25 and soon went into the perfume business, ultimately founding the Anne Haviland Company, importers of French perfume.

His involvement with tribal art started with a love of Modern art and the personal relationships established with painters in Paris on his business trip there as early as 1935. The Russian painter Kostia Terechkovitch became his dear friend and introduced him to Chaïm Soutine and Pinchus Kremegne. De Havenon was soon caught up in the artist's ideas and enthusiasms. While living in an apartment in Greenwich Village, de Havenon met and became friends with Arshile Gorky and Isamu Noguchi. It was through these artists that he developed a passion for collecting that started with Modern art but soon moved into African art.

In his statement for the exhibition of his African art collection at the Museum of African Art, de Havenon said that it was on a transatlantic crossing by ship to France in 1950 that he met Ulfert Wilke who “opened his eyes to the primitive art with which I was to become so profoundly intrigued.”<sup>1</sup> The photographer Eliot Elisofon encouraged him to buy his first piece of African art—a Fang mask. On de Havenon's semiannual business trips to Europe, he got to know a number of the Parisian dealers such as René Rasmussen and Robert Duperrier, who he credits with training his eye for quality.

He initially focused on the art of the Dogon, but he “became more and more enchanted with the diversity of tribal styles which taught me to understand and love the seemingly endless ingenuity of those African artists who worked such emotion and spirituality into their three-dimensional forms.”

The collector later became a dealer with the opening of an art gallery in the Fuller Building, at Madison Avenue and 57<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, that he operated until the 1970s.

In his opening statement for his 1971 Museum of African Art exhibition, he wrote an insightful passage that is relevant for all collectors of tribal art, and I think it bears quoting in full:

*Unlike the purchase of a western painting which is unavoidably influenced by the name of the artist, what is challenging and exciting for the collector who selects an African sculpture is that you are completely on your own. You may have the satisfaction of looking at the painting, but as you turn a fine object between your hands you experience an emotion which is heightened by your physical contact with its detailed form and the quality and patina of the wood. This experience gives you the feeling that you become closer and somehow part of the artist who has created such a miraculous work.*

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<sup>1</sup> AFRICAN ART: The de Havenon Collection, Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C., 1971





## 20 Upper Keram/Middle Ramu River Dancing Female Figure

Upper Keram/Middle Ramu River area, border East Sepik and Madang Provinces, Papua New Guinea

Merton D. Simpson, New York

Edward H. Merrin Gallery, New York, acquired from above before 1963

Pre-contact, stone-carved, early 20th century or earlier

29 ½" (74.9 cm) in height

As the Upper Keram River twists and turns to the southeast of the Lower Sepik River, it connects to the Middle Ramu River at Annaberg mission station. It is a very remote region. The present female figure has a face that is spare and concave, featuring stalk eyes, a raised nose with pierced septum, and no mouth. The arms reach up and grab an appendage coming from below the chin. There is lightness and movement to the female figure with her toes pointed down, the right leg pushed forward, and left reaching back. There is a dry softness to the surface consistent with pre-contact stone adzing.







## 21 Hunstein Mountain *Garra* Hook

Bahinemo culture, Hunstein Mountain Range, East Sepik  
Province, Papua New Guinea

New York private collection

Early 20th century

50 ½" (128.2 cm) in height

With an art tradition defined by raw archaic power, one judges its quality by this characteristic. Yes, there is elegance and occasionally refinement sometimes found in Hunstein Mountain material, but the core is a primeval vitality expressed in rough-hewn opposed hooks. What drew me to this piece initially was the stretched-out spine with broad tabs on each end and the elliptical eye in the center. The figure is pure with a total absence of decadence.







# The Garra figures of the Bahinemo

T. Wayne Dye PhD

Garra (gē 'rä) (no plural) is the word used by the Bahinemo (bä 'hē nēm o) people for a traditional set of religious artifacts. These include the famous hook carvings, but also bamboo flutes and pipes kept and played to please them, and the "tambran house" or "men's cult house" where the men practice this religion. The most important artifact they have is the *garra homu*, the artistic hooked figures, of which we are concerned here.

Bahinemos are the people who own and inhabit all of the Hunstein mountain range in the East Sepik Province, an area bordered by the April, Sitifa (Blackwater), and Salumei rivers, and, to the north, the line where the hills give way to the Sepik River floodplain. The Bahinemo people were hunters and gatherers who moved frequently through the 500 square miles of this tropical forest. Their lives were not easy; deaths from tropical diseases, which they normally blamed on witchcraft, often led to mutual suspicion and war.

Many babies died, and those who survived to adulthood seldom lived beyond their fifties. By the time we arrived, their population had dwindled to 308 people.

My wife I lived and worked among the Bahinemo as anthropologist/missionaries, for much of each year from 1964 until 1985. We learned the language, provided much-needed medical help, showed them new ways to improve their daily lives, developed a way they could write their language, and translated portions of the New Testament.

Particularly in the 1960s, the Bahinemo people were totally dependent on their garra carvings. On several occasions, we observed how much they trusted those carvings to protect them from the evil spirits that they believed were ready to kill them at the first opportunity. For example, in 1968 I saw an anthropologist (who should have known better) keep raising the price he was willing to pay for the maingarra in the remote village of Moli until it reached the astronomical sum of money. (As an anthropologist, he should have known better.) The village headman, who had the social right to sell it was literally shaking in the end, wanting that money so badly. However, he refused to sell it, saying, "If it goes, our village is completely unprotected."

The garra carvings were kept inside the men's cult house except when the village was going to be empty and vulnerable to strangers coming. Then they were hidden in deep pools to protect them from both human visitors and the ravages of insects and rot. They were also brought out for a short time at the culmination of a boys' initiation ceremony. "Seeing the garra" was the central supernatural focus



ABOVE: Boys Initiation ceremony





of the initiation, partly because seeing them was thought to make the boys into stronger young men. Before that was done, all women and young children were sent to the far end of the village. Pregnant and nursing women were required to leave the village entirely; the garra were just too dangerous for them.

All of the garra were considered to be spirits. Some had stylized faces, and all had projections that were believed to be teeth. None of the projections were conceived to be hooks. In addition to protecting the village, garra figures were believed to magically chew on the foreshafts of arrows (arrowhead bases) being carved, at least as long as the carver was careful to work in the men's cult house and use an animal tooth for carving it.



ABOVE: Boys Initiation ceremony







I learned this quite inadvertently when I was in Moli Village with an anthropologist. We were staying a few days in the men's cult house in Moli, the normal place for a friendly male visitor to stay. My anthropologist friend was collecting arrow-foreshaft patterns, recognizing them as a work of art. I asked an older man about them as he sat in the men's house carving one. He suddenly said, "What is it that I am using to carve this foreshaft?" I was stumbling around trying to guess what bone it was when he answered his own question. "It is a tooth, dummy. I use a tooth so that as I carve it, that (pointing to a garra hanging there) is chewing on it, and THAT is why it will fly straight." I realized that the shape of the shaft was not nearly as important to him as utilizing the power of the garra to make it able to kill game.

It was extremely difficult for a casual outsider to learn much about Bahinemo religious beliefs, particularly





about the garra complex. The first reason was that they didn't trust any outsiders, especially those who might appropriate those valuable carvings. Even friendly strangers could ignorantly spill this information to women, who might be endangered by knowing. It was safer to make up stories or to deny knowing anything. I was there for four years before it was possible to have an open conversation about the details surrounding their religious system and the carvings.

The second reason outsiders had trouble was the casual nature of Bahinemo pedagogy. Boys mostly learned by observation, sometimes with short questions. There were no catechisms because there was no systematic body of shared knowledge. There were no religious specialists with special rights and knowledge about the garra religion. There were origin stories, but even those were brief and provided no details about how a garra should look or what each "tooth" and carving meant. As a result, no one had much information to offer, and two people could come to slightly different understandings of how things worked.

It wasn't even easy to know how old a garra was or where it had come from. It was considered worshipful, and possibly even enhanced the power of a garra, to give it a fresh coat of clay paint before a ceremony. That, coupled with the impact of occasional immersions in water followed by fresh painting meant that one could not tell the age of a garra by looking at it.

Not all of the carvings were considered to be real garra. Bahinemos believed it was respectful to carve new copies of real garra, generally following the designs of the real ones but with considerable artistic license. A carving whose maker was known was not believed to be a real garra with spiritual power. But deaths came young, and not many years needed to pass before no one knew or remembered who had carved a particular figure. As soon as a carving's origin was lost to memory, it was considered a real garra. Therefore, it is safe to say that all of the ones known to be copies when we were there would be worshipped as real by now.

In this belief system, the size and shape of each individual garra was relatively unimportant. A garra-style carving known to be recently made by someone was simply a work of art. However, once people forgot who made it, it became a garra and was believed to be a powerful spirit whose worship was important to assure Bahimeno well-being.







## 22 Admiralty Island Male Figure

Admiralty Islands, Manus Province, Papua New Guinea  
Harry Franklin Collection (O/437), Beverly Hills,  
California

Published in *Oceanic Art: A Celebration of Form*,  
by George R. Ellis, 2009, no. 21

19th century

27  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (70.4 cm) in height

Much of Admiralty Island art is figurative. The wooden bowls sometimes have figures on each end; lime spatulas and coconut shell ladles often have figurative handles. There are bed posts, canoe decorations, and architectural elements featuring figures on them. Yet there are surprisingly few free-standing figures. Not surprisingly, there is very little written on their possible function. Alfred Bühler came to the conclusion that the figures probably relate to recently deceased individuals and in some instances act as reminders for outstanding death payments due surviving relatives.







## 23 Iatmul Suspension Hook

Iatmul culture, Middle Sepik River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Field Collected by Oscar Meyer in 1958

Harry Franklin Collection (O 1808)

Late 19th/early 20th century

34 ¼" (87.1 cm) in height

When looking at a piece of New Guinea art, one first takes an overall impression of the form and style. This will generally tell you all you need to know about cultural attribution, age, and quality. You can quickly get a sense of an object being either pre- or post-contact and its ranking relative to other known examples. But in some instances, for example with Sepik material, because there are so many items with quite similar styles it might come down to telltale details to corroborate one's gut instinct.

Because Middle Sepik suspension hooks are far from rare and often somewhat standardized in composition, it is easy to lump them together. That would be a mistake. The haunting expression initially drew me to the present piece. Even amongst the crowds of Sepik figurative objects, the haunting, beyond-the-grave stare of this piece was unmistakable. But it was the structure of the head and the way it wraps around the neck and most especially the hole in the nasal septum—not just how large it is but how deep it is carved down into the facial plane. This is just not found on merely old figures but only on the very earliest.







## 24 Yangoru Boiken Female Ancestral Spirit Figure

Yangoru Boiken area, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea  
Field collected by Michael Kremerskothen, Dortmund, Germany  
Published in *Art of the Boiken*, by Michael Hamson, 2011,  
no. 15, page 66

Early 20th century or before  
25 ¼" (64 cm) in height

While less well-known than their western neighbors the Abelam, the Boiken people created some magnificent figurative sculpture. This female ancestral spirit is from the Yangoru area and has a compact, powerful composition. The oval head sprouts directly out of the shoulders; the arms follow the curve of the torso to rest its hands on the abdomen. The legs are bent in the classic "hocker" position associated with childbirth. The expression is direct and forthright—with a toothy grin, pierced nose and ears. The red, white, and black pigments are muted and softened with age.





## My Field Collecting Career

By Michael Kremerskothen



I was attracted to art in a broader sense from a very early age and grew up with old art and antiques. As a teenager, museum

visits were an important and enjoyable part of my experience. In childhood I learned to love the North American Indians through old books, because of their very nature-oriented way of life and their beautiful cultural objects.

During my studies, I also became involved with their wise view of the world. As a high school student, I saw books about the primitive peoples of Papua New Guinea and felt these cultures to be as very strange, mysterious and original. It was only many years later that I suddenly and unexpectedly had the opportunity to travel to these regions.

This stimulated me to deal with the art of the different regions, through literature, museum visits and the exchange with other collector friends. A special pleasure for me were the hours of intensive discussions about the expressiveness and quality of the objects and quality of the objects in various museums in Germany, Europe and overseas, which I especially enjoyed visiting with long-time collector friend Klaus Maaz.

Also the important auctions, exhibitions and fairs in the 90s gladly in London, later in Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels and also occasionally in the USA were and still are an enrichment. I was also very impressed by the inspiring effect of the Oceanic cultural objects on the artists after 1900, for their art had long appealed to me. This tribal art with all its facets will delight and inspire me throughout my life to understand it even more deeply and inspire me to understand and feel it even more deeply.

### TRAVELS

Between 1988 and 2001 I made at least one two-month trip per year—totally 16 trips at 2 months each and one of a four-month stay. In the East Sepik Province, starting from Wewak, I visited the islands of Kairiru, Mushu, Tarawai, Walis and the Schouten Islands. I collected in some villages along the northern coast road like Wonginara.

My specialty was the Boiken area—all villages from Wewak to Passam. Then from the junction in Passam the whole region to Angoram on the Sepik. Along the road towards Maprik, from Passam to the junction in Hayfield all villages right and left—both Boiken and Abelam including the Sepik plains and the Roma. I collected in the entire Abelam area from the north to the south to Pagwi including Yama.

Furthermore, I made trips to the West, Eastern and Southern Highlands including the Lake Kutubu region. From Port Moresby I explored the Woitape-Tapini region. In Milne Bay Province, I first traveled along the mainland and then visited almost all the islands. In Madang Province I collected on Manam Island and in the whole region around Bogia far into the grassland.

From what is known as Base Camp I canoed along the Ramu River to the south and then along the Guam River. There I explored all the tribes of the region including the region around Josephstaal and from there back to Bogia.

In West New Guinea, I visited Lake Sentani from Jayapura, then various villages in the region from Wamena. Finally, I explored the Asmat area around Agats and Merauke before flying back to Bali. In Australia, I contacted dealers and also collectors in Cairns, Brisbane and Sydney.

Over all these years several thousand pieces from different regions passed through my hands. This enriched my wealth of experience and as a result I learned much more about age, patina, the style variations, the design power and the cultural background of the objects.

In order to be able to finance my travels, I built up contacts with many important dealers and auction houses in Europe and the USA.

#### COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

Before I started my respective journeys to the most different tribes of Papua New Guinea, I contacted the National Museum in Port Moresby. This cooperation led to regular inspections of the pieces I had acquired, before I was issued the necessary export certificate. In addition, cultural items very important to the museum I was happy to donate on a regular basis.

#### IN THE FIELD

The collecting expeditions took me to the most remote regions possible, which I discovered by studying maps. To please the people, I brought metal boxes full of coveted foodstuffs and various utensils as gifts to the villages. This was for me like a time travel into a still quite original world, in which humans and the plants and animal world surrounding it were self-supporting and interconnected.

I felt privileged to have the unique chance to be taken into these still quite untouched human communities for a certain time, to share with them the daily life and to exchange ideas about the things of life. To bathe in the early morning in the crystal clear water of a river, surrounded by a green paradise and the sound of exotic bird songs. The evenings were often spent after a common meal under the immense starry sky around an open fire, sharing stories from their world and mine in the local language, Tok Pisin.

Over time, I was allowed deeper insights into cultural contexts. I was also allowed to participate in some ceremonies still taking place among the Abelam people. In many regions I was welcomed again and again as a guest during all these years.

The contact and exchange with many of the old wise men (Big Man + Chiefs) of the most different regions made me sadly realize how much of their old traditional magical understanding of the world, which allowed these cultures to survive successfully over centuries, were now visibly left alone and no longer respected by the majority of the younger generation. The missionaries and the advancing







modern life have disempowered the old culture to a large extent and pushed it to the margins of life.

The very old traditional world with a still quite intact tribal culture was only continued to be upheld in rather remote areas. This was evident in carvings for certain festive occasions and rituals from older and more recent times, which could also be of high artistic quality. On the one hand, with the purely individual artistic talent, experience and maturity of the creator plays an important role. If his basic idea penetrates the whole work into all important elements, in order to still increase this in its effect with an individual touch, with an unexpected and surprising variation of design, then one can speak of perfection of form, a particularly successful work.

Regardless of the individual aesthetic ability of a sensitive carver, his spiritual immersion in the magical cosmos of culture, the sensation and emotion in his deep faith is of elementary importance for the expressiveness and radiance and thus the quality of a cult object always and fundamentally follows a culturally conditioned canon of design.

Thus, a masterpiece is permeated by the union of the highest aesthetic demands with the inspiring, essential and magical energy of origin.

In this context I refer to works of art, which were produced in a time, when the existence of the white man was still unknown. Such cultural objects, inherited over generations, with an extremely reduced formal language, were kept in secret places and were often characterized by a much deeper, magical and soulful expressiveness, which was further emphasized by the rich patina and the very soft-looking lines.

## COLLECTING ACTIVITIES

In most cases, important inherited objects were left to me by younger people, because they could improve their economic situation, for example, by planting vanilla plantations. The fathers or grandfathers found it much more difficult to part with inherited cult objects, because they feared to lose the source of strength of their existence, even if their children did not want to believe this anymore.

Although on the one hand it was not easy for me to give up pursuing a wonderful old mask of an older man, I was touched by his deep belief in its elementary power for securing the living conditions of his community. This he manifested with a strong sense of responsibility even as his sons completely disagreed.

Sometimes fragments of figures I acquired were kept back, in order to be able to transfer from them the magic and power into other carvings. Once, after acquiring a figure, I noticed how an elderly man, painted in the face, seized it by the head while his whole body was trembling, and his skin was wet with beads of sweat. Later it was whispered to me that he had drawn the secret powers from the carving so that he could later channel them into another object.

Sometimes I was able to save works directly from decay through my purchase, because those responsible had in these cases had thrown the inherited carvings into the jungle for reasons unknown to me.

## NOW SOME THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ART OBJECTS

These are my personal views based on my experiences, adventures and impressions at the cultures I visited in Papua New Guinea about what they embodied and what they stood for in the still living cultural environment.

The ancestral portrait was a representative of the self-image of the tribe, an embodiment and a guardian of the spiritual-cultural cosmos, in which the group members, guided by appropriate rituals, grew from the young initiate up to the wise Big Man matured in the responsibility for the whole. Through the recurring ritual visualization of the principles and wisdom of the culture, it was renewed and vitalized.

These ancestor-od figures were and are effective in their multi-layered presence: Eternal, essential, elemental, sublime, serious, austere, self-contained, sovereign, resolute, grounding, sacred, supernatural, inspirational, powerful, energetic, powerful, perilous, demanding, relentless, concentrated, focused, magical, and soulful. Their magical energy potential was further enriched and heightened by motifs and elements often borrowed from the animal world.

One turned to the sacred sculptures with the highest respect, devotion, reverence, gratitude and awe because one owed them the gift of the presence on all levels. Basically, one hoped for help and support from them for the life to be mastered, the struggle for life with all its facets, surrounded by an immense natural world.

This requested help was the magical internalized life force, a source of origin, a source of power, an elixir of life, a divine spark, an inspiration, which permeates everything and brings it to perfection, for the benefit of the community. It is an elemental energy that makes everything succeed and supports everything, a magic, a magic remedy.

## ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET THIS ART FOR US TODAY FROM A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW

These soulful cultural objects, charged with magical powers, with their unbelievable variety of representational forms and an often high artistic sensibility seem to have a longing and fascination for us modern people. As sensitive cultural people, who still carry at least a spark of the magical thinking of early childhood, they let us sense some of the soulful power which the artist has invested out of deep feeling.

In our childhood we were closer to the animistic and magical thinking of primitive peoples. Due to the excessive emphasis on rational and purposeful thinking of modernity, our emotional levels suffer. These works of art enrich us emotionally and spiritually by harmonizing our inner being and bringing it into balance.

We should try to strengthen the emotional, connect more inwardly with people, animals and the plant world, to be able to be more ourselves and more human. The works of art of the tribal peoples with their original energy are helpful for us, to feel more in harmony with our world. Through their soulful power and magic, they open our senses to the unconscious, to the enigmatic, the veiled and mysterious. They touch us, challenge us to broaden our perspective and focus on the essential.





## 25 Guam River Hornbill Dance Carving

Isarikan village, Guam River area, Madang Province, Papua  
New Guinea

Field collected by Michael Kremerskothen, Dortmund,  
Germany

Pre-contact, stone-carved, 19th century

30 ½" (77.4 cm) in height



The Guam River is a very remote tributary to the east of the middle Ramu River. The anthropologist Dirk Smidt has written about the one-legged figures from the Kominimung people, but, other than this, there is virtually nothing on this amazing art-producing area. As this hornbill carving attests, the pre-contact style is raw and powerful.





## 26 Telefomin Shield, *Atkom*

Telefol culture, Kubrenmin parish, Oksivip village, Ifitaman Telefolmin, Sandaun (West Sepik) Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected by Patrick Batina

Michael Hamson, Palos Verdes Estates, California

Paul Harris, Anchorage, Alaska

Jolika Collection of John and Marcia Friede, Rye, New York

Dale Hardcastle Collection, Singapore

Published in *Michael Hamson Oceanic Art* Paris 2011, no. 16, pages 32/33, and in New Guinea

Highlands: Art from the Jolika Collection, 2017, fig. 16.30, pages 530/31

Pre-contact, stone-carved, 19th century

60<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (154 cm) in height

This ancient shield is one of a very few objects with a known history prior to its collection. According to the anthropologist Barry Craig, who did extensive fieldwork in the area, there are two different versions of this shield's history. As he recounts it in the New Guinea Highlands: Art from the Jolika Collection book:

"The first, and perhaps the more likely, dates from 1967, when it was stated to the author that it had been made with stone tools, from lightweight *ful* timber, by Tumlisep, the grandfather of a fifty-five-year-old man in the community, before the man was born. It was made as a copy of a shield captured during a raid on the Duranmin (Asabano), who live at the headwaters of the Om (Strickland) River, east of the Elip Valley. The Duranmin original and a captured Mianmin shield were both destroyed when a Falamin raiding party burned down the house in which they were stored. The personal name of the copy of the Duranmin shield is Walbinam, and it was used many times in raids against the Falamin.

"The second version dates from 1983, when it was stated to the author that the shield had been captured by Kesumeng during a raid against the Duranmin before Richard Thurnwald arrived in Telefomin in 1914; therefore, its personal name is Duranmin. It was inherited by Kesumeng's son Wanamasep, who passed it on to his sons, Bumtubiok, Baganok, and Ulang Bopnok."

Craig cautions that the two different stories should not be considered contradictory but rather "that in all likelihood, the two stories are part of the one narrative, and that possibility is what field collectors always have to be conscious of; forgetting parts of oral history, 'telescoping' events and genealogies and lines of ownership" are a relatively common occurrence (Barry Craig, personal communication, 4 June 2021).

What is also important with this shield is the fact that Craig was able to record an informant's explanation on the various design elements. A line drawing with local names and meanings is illustrated in the Jolika book, but the central black circle is *matup bubil* or crocodile's heart. The undulating black line at the top is *durulian*, a long, thin snake. The black dots along the bottom are *mamul timbugun*, holes made by a fat white grub in the trunk of a tree.











*A war shield called Duranmin, held by Obal of Oksivip village, Kubrenmin parish, Ifitaman, Telefolmin, 1967. Photo by Barry Craig*



## 27 Middle Sepik River War Trumpet

Iatmul culture, Middle Sepik River, East Sepik Province,  
Papua New Guinea

Sotheby's London, 10 December 1974, lot 129

Christie's New York, 4 November 1994, lot 19

Sydney and Lynn Lerman Collection, New York, acquired  
from the above auction

By Descent to Mark Lerman, Richmond, Virginia

Late 19th/early 20th century

52<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (133 cm) in height

Trumpets such as this were taken into battle and would, if successful, be blown before reaching the home village to signal the number of enemies killed. This one is exceptional for its scale and the beauty of its carved design. I especially love the trail of repeating tongue motifs leading up from the spirit face at the base all the way to the main ancestral head at the top, encircling the mouth hole in its path.









## 28 Western Desert Australia Stone Churinga

Kimberley region, Western Australia  
 Collected at Fitzroy Crossing in the 1920s/30s  
 American private collection since the 1970s  
 Georgia Sales Collection, Belvedere, California  
 19th century  
 23 ½" (59.6 cm) in height

This superb large stone *churinga* has the classic Central Australia design of concentric circles and spirals. Daniel Sutherland Davidson wrote *A Preliminary Consideration of Aboriginal Australian Decorative Art* in 1937 for the American Philosophical Society. In it, he discusses the significance and meaning of the predominant concentric circle and spiral designs of stone churingas from the Arunta and Loritja people who were the main users of stone *churingas*. He makes note that individual interpretations of the designs vary, but what matters is the local's ability to identify the totemic affiliation of each *churinga*. He goes on to state some of the meanings associated with the classic concentric circle design, "A group of concentric circles or a spiral, the most important motifs, are often interpreted as representing a totem center, the totemic animal or plant, a water-hole or some other natural feature of the terrain, a camp of human beings or of mythological totemic ancestors, the imprint in the earth left by a person's buttocks, the intestines of an animal or bird, an egg, or other things or places of a similar nature" (p.95).





## 29 Fijian *Gugu* Club

Fiji

Tad Dale, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Will Hughes, Palos Verdes Estates, California

Late 18th century

39 ¼" (99.7 cm) in height

Here is an old-style Fijian *gugu* club named after the butterfly fish. Carved from a dense hardwood, the shaft is oval and conspicuously unadorned and rough-hewn, contrasting with the delicate and precisely carved head. The Fijian art scholar Fergus Clunie suggests that *gugu* were used more for dance and ceremony than battle, but the weight and wear suggests something more homicidal. The age, wear, and lethality of the club can only be appreciated in hand.













### 30 Lake Sentani Wooden Plate

Lake Sentani area, West Papua

Collected by the American Army officer Woodruff Bryne in 1944

By descent through the family

Early 20th century

26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (67 cm) in height

The art of Lake Sentani is justifiably renowned with the rare figure sculpture at the pinnacle of desirability in Oceanic art. Yet for me, the best Sentani art are the shallow oval wood dishes with carved undersides. Often the allover designs are superb examples of graphic art. The present example has a mesmerizing composition of spiral ovals that morph into undulating ripples that radiate out in waves as when a pebble is dropped into water. The clarity of this complex design is heightened by the white lime-filled shallow areas contrasted against the dark relief-carved patterns.









### 31 Middle Sepik River Suspension Hook

Iatmul culture, Middle Sepik River, East Sepik Province,  
Papua New Guinea

Southern England collection

David and Bonnie Ross, Indianapolis

Pasadena California private collection

Illustrated in *Michael Hamson Oceanic Art* Paris 2011,  
no. 11

*Michael Hamson Oceanic Art* Paris 2018, no. 32

Pre-contact, stone-carved, late 19th century

24¾" (62.9 cm) in height

This ancient pre-contact suspension hook is exceptional for its powerful expression, delicacy of its painted design, and the ingenious use of fish motifs—the mudfish head as the basis of the bottom hook and the fish for shoulder blades. This represents the best in Sepik River art—the rough-hewn quality of a pre-contact piece combined with the finesse and creativity for which the area is known.







## 32 Tami Island Bowl

Tami Island or Huon Gulf region, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea

Collected by Nancy Thomas, late 1960s/early 1970s

Sidney Rosen Collection, Phoenix, Arizona

19th century

29 ½" (75 cm) in length

There was a time in the mid 1990s that I spent a lot of time field collecting wooden bowls in the Huon Gulf region of Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. I focused on the remote villages well inland and up the slopes of the volcanic Umboi Island. Here the people had their old wooden bowls lying in the rafters, with smaller ones nested inside the larger dishes. After nearly collapsing a number of local bush-material houses by hoisting my body up into the rafters, I got quite adept at recognizing good old bowls. The present one was in a Phoenix, Arizona mansion, and its quality could be spotted from across the room. It is ancient with a gorgeous deep-black and glossy patina and raised relief-carved stylized crocodiles. It is hard to convey the pleasure of holding a beautifully carved wooden object that generations of wear and use have given a polished jewel-like surface.











### 33 Abelam Wooden Headdress, *Wakan*

Kwambigum village, southeastern Abelam area toward Roma village, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea  
Field collected by Michael Kremerskothen, Dortmund, Germany

Published *Art of the Abelam*, by Michael Hamson, 2015, no. 112, p. 208

Early 20th century or before

37<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (95 cm) in height

I have known of this old Abelam wooden headdress for decades and feel fortunate to have been able to acquire it for this exhibition. As a former field collector who spent a lot of time in the Abelam area, I was always attracted to the age and delicacy of this piece. The openwork design is a complex composition of a central ancestral spirit surrounded by totemic birds. The headdress is remarkable for its obvious long ceremonial life. When an artifact is repeatedly used through the generations, it continually earns its cultural significance. This importance can be both seen and felt in the object itself, from the worn rounded edges and thick layers of magical paint. It is that combination in this headdress of a light, airy structure with the heavy ritual residue that I personally find so compelling.









### 34 Massim Lime Spatula Figure

Massim culture, Milne Bay Province, Papua  
New Guinea

Private collection, London, 1970s

New York collection

Skinner Auction, Boston, 2011

19th century

6 ½" (16.5 cm) in height

Often the figurative sections of Massim lime spatulas are quite stylized and embellished with intricate designs carved onto the surface—making them visually interesting but somewhat decorative. It is rare to get a true figure, unadorned, with its power generated by its sculptural form. On this example, the limbs, while thin and delicate, have a strength from their being connected at the joints and being looped back to the solid torso. The face is wide-eyed and smiling, the head jutting forward and low to the body—the latter being a consistent indicator of an early style in New Guinea figurative art. The deep, glossy patina corroborates this antiquity.







### 35 Southern Abelam Balsawood Yam Mask

Southern Abelam area known as the Wosera,  
East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea  
Field collected by Roy James Hedlund, summer  
1960

Edward M. Brownlee Collection, Honolulu

By descent through the family

Early 20th century

10 ¼" (26 cm) in height

Abelam yam masks are predominantly made with strips of cane using the coiling technique—often incorrectly called woven yam masks. Then there are the wooden versions often found in the central and eastern Abelam areas. These often are somewhat flat with oval spirit faces painted with a fairly conventional Abelam style. But there are also the balsawood yam masks from the southern Abelam. It must be the very nature of the material, that soft, light, easily carved wood that allows such a freedom to the artist. With the hardwood versions the eyes are often just halfmoons below a crisp brow, the nose a thin raised ridge, the mouth a simple incised crescent. The beauty of the mask is left to the painted surface decoration. Here, on the balsawood example, the volumes inflate and become wonderfully full and rounded. Black has been replaced by blue to further confound expectations.







## Visits to Maprik by Roy James Hedlund

Virginia-Lee Webb Ph.D.



*Roy James Hedlund 1961, photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

The name Roy James Hedlund (1939-2020) has become synonymous with collections of sculpture from Papua New Guinea assembled in the mid-twentieth century. New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, and Tabar are among the places we know he visited in the early 1960s.

Hedlund attended Punahou School, the University of Hawai'i, Honolulu and the California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, CA. As a young man, he met L. R. Webb who managed a theater in Honolulu who also had an interest in the arts. They discovered the arts of the Pacific and Hedlund soon traveled to the region with his then wife Julie Pinney. Webb accompanied him on a few trips and became his business partner who coordinated the sales and distribution of sculptures that Hedlund collected.

Hedlund is probably most known for his collections of sculptures from the Papuan Gulf area in early 1960s. Although the area had been missionized in the late nineteenth early-twentieth century, traditional beliefs and arts associated with them remained often in secret. Although the traditional objects were generally disparaged by the resident missionaries-many who participated in their sale and destruction- local residents often placed these still powerful objects outside of the village hidden in secure places. This was especially true in the Gulf region where Hedlund was guided to their location often in abandoned areas.

The Abelam people who live in the Maprik area north of the Sepik River (often called Sepik Hills) had contact with outsiders in the early twentieth century, specifically "in the Wosera area by Richard Thurnwald during his 1913 exploration of the Sepik foothills."<sup>1</sup> Throughout the second decade of the twentieth-century subsequent conflicts ensued resulting from harsh colonial labor recruiters. By the 1930s, the administration had established a significant presence in the area. World War II brought additional disruption, but by the late 1950s researchers such as Anthony Forge visited between 1958-1963.<sup>2</sup>

Hedlund and Webb made notes on the paper mounts of the 35mm color transparencies indicating the date the photo was taken and often individual's names and locations where sculptures were collected. Based on those captions, he was in the Maprik area in 1960, July 1961 and January-March 1962. He photographed individuals, architecture and collected numerous traditional sculptures from the area, such as this mask.

The Abelam have festivals connected with harvests and rituals connected with the passage to adulthood and prestige. The Abelam are known for their distinctive architecture and sculptural displays which play a significant role in the rituals



*Roy James Hedlund 1961, photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

and the education young men must learn in order to become fully initiated in the ways of the adult community. These cult houses have a triangular base and the similarly shaped facades are emblazoned with painted sheets of bark. Often a carved and painted wooden lintel with motifs of human figures or heads delineates the lower part of the structure with a doorway to a hidden interior space that contains elaborate sculptural displays only initiated men can see.

The Abelam are known for their accomplishments growing long yams which can reach several meters. "The cult house and ceremonial grounds are closely linked with the yam cult...almost every year elderly Abelam men grow particularly long specimens of this tuber in special gardens...a wide range of rites are performed."<sup>3</sup> The cycle of events and rites connected with the growing of yams are displays of the longest specimens that are decorated with ornaments and colorful vegetation as well as masks of basketry and wood, the latter illustrated here. The elaborate displays activate competition and exchanges between "ceremonial moieties." "The finest specimens [of yams] are regarded as incarnations of important clan spirits and also bear their name...sometimes a long ceremonial yam is kept in the cult house after the display..."<sup>4</sup> thus the yam masks such as this example are an integral part of the long yam display by which prestige is noted in the community.

*Haus Tambaran Maprik Hills, March 1962,  
photo by Roy Hedlund, courtesy of the  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*



1 Richard Scaglion. "Reconstructing First Contact: Some Local Effects of Labor Recruitment in the Sepik." Sepik Heritage. *Tradition and Change in Papua New Guinea*, edited by Nancy Lutkehaus, et.al. Carolina Academic Press Durham 1990:50-51.

2 <https://australian.museum/learn/cultures/international-collection/balinese/anthony-forge-biographical-sketch/>

3 Brigitta Hauser-Schaublin. *Kulthäuser in Nordneuguinea*. Akademie-Verlag Berlin 1989: 610)

4 Hauser-Schaublin 1989: 611.



### 36 Abelam Cane Yam Mask, *Bapa Mene*

Abelam culture, Maprik area, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Voss Collection, St. Louis, acquired in the mid 1970s

Early-/mid-20th century

22  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (57.8 cm) in height

The growing of long yams is the height of masculinity in Abelam society. It is through a man's hard work, strict adherence to harsh taboos, personal magic, and the strength of one's ancestral spirits that enable a long yam to grow to awe-inspiring lengths. When these massive tubers are decorated and displayed, there is considerable majesty and showmanship involved. While I often preach of the charms of small, tightly constructed yam masks, this one celebrates the grandeur and pride of the ceremony. It is large with an oversized face of robust volumes. The headdress section is perfectly proportioned, and the entirety is painted with bold pigments—which themselves are magical.





### 37 Abelam Cane Yam Mask, *Bapa Mene*

Bobmukum village, southern Abelam area, the Wosera, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Field collected by Michael Kremerskothen, Dortmund, Germany

Published in *Art of the Abelam* by Michael Hamson, 2015, no. 83, page 169

Early 20th century

11  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (30 cm) in height

As a counterpoint to the previous yam mask that was full of energy and vitality, this one exudes age and antiquity. Its colors are faded and obscured by a dark patina from having been stored in the rafters, gathering dust, and enveloped in the smoke of countless cooking fires. It belongs to a different era when yam masks were smaller, and the best were made by men who prided themselves on the tightness of their technique. The mask's vitality now solely resides in its expression. Which, with its age, ties this mask to the early period of long-yam ceremonies.







### 38 Yangoru Boiken *Talipun* Bride Price Payment

Yangoru Boiken culture, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea

Field collected by Michael Kremerskothen, Dortmund, Germany

Published in *Art of the Boiken* by Michael Hamson, 2011, no. 99, page 159

Early 20th century

19 ¼" (48.8 cm) in height

Within the realm of tribal art tradition and the adherence to classic forms is often found a universal principle. This is true for the most part in Oceania, but this strict adherence to a particular convention tends to break down a bit in New Guinea. Amongst the Boiken, the artistic guidelines of one's grandfather seems only to serve as a launching pad to one's own artistic sensibilities. The Boiken are fiercely egalitarian, and the artists often have a competitive streak of one-upmanship to them. *Talipun* come in a seemingly endless variety of styles and forms. There is a whimsical creativity to them that is of a different level altogether. The present *talipun* is a case in point with an oval-shaped wooden top featuring a relief-carved ancestral spirit figure. Along the wooden section's outer edge is a band of traditional cane. The figure is painted bright pink, and it floats above a background of vivid blue. The sturdy, minimally worked green turban seashell marks this *talipun* as a male *humbuli*.







### 39 Small Maori Carved Head

Rukupo School, Gisborne district, northeastern New Zealand

Malcolm Kirk Collection

H. Jaeger Collection

Mid-19th century

3 ¼" (8.4 cm) in height

Malcolm Kirk is probably best known in the Oceanic art community for his wonderful 1981 book *Man as Art, New Guinea*, featuring amazing photographs of fully decorated Highlands men and women. He was also a keen collector of New Guinea art, and many people overlook the section at the back of the book, showing black and white photographs of masterpieces, mostly masks.

The present Maori head probably came from one end of a feather box. It is a little gem of Maori artistry and figurative style. It is both delicate and bold, with great details and imposing volumes for such a diminutive object. The patina is a rich chocolate brown.





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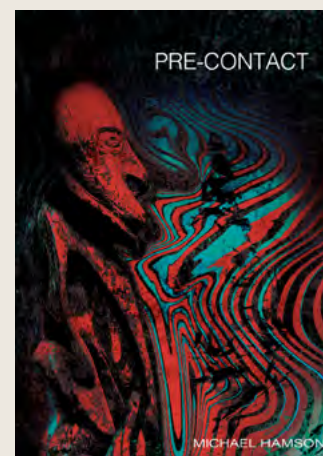
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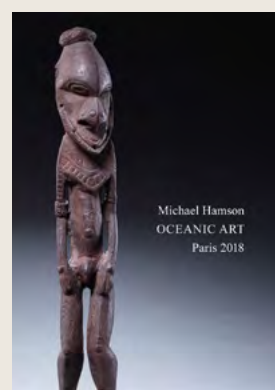
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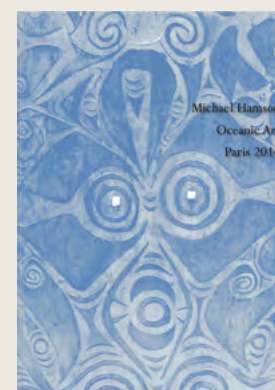
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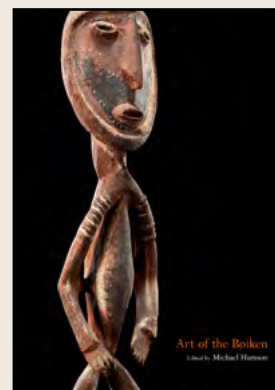
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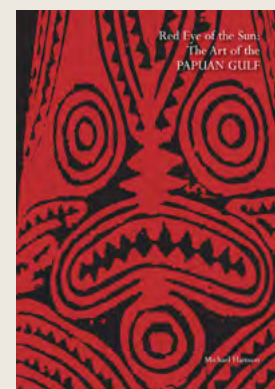
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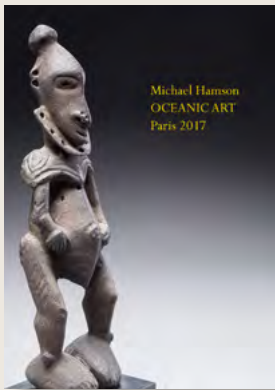
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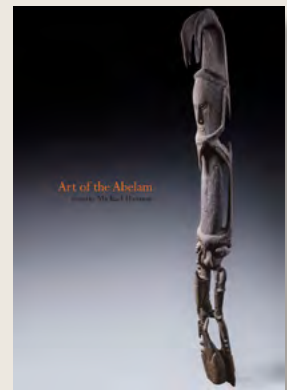
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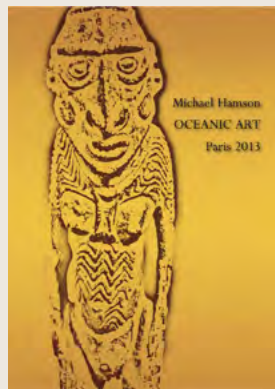
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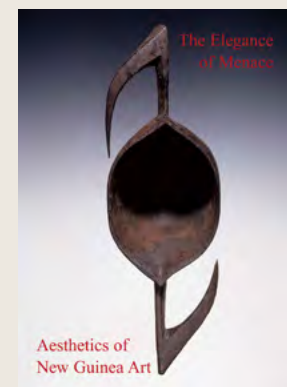
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